Leaving Gilead for a Friendly Nearby Country

Fleeing Gilead for Canada

A Resource Collection

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Preface

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Many years ago, long before we could look things up on the Web, a friend from the US had a problem: he abruptly needed to move to Canada. When we both were in university, he described how hard it had been to make the move. So we thought about writing a guide-book about his journey.

We never did. Researching it turned out to be *painfully* hard, even using the University’s library and resources.

However, we now have the web. There is a ton of information out there. Research is still hard, but now it is a matter of finding information in the noise. What we need today is a ***research guide*** to all the available books and web pages, so you can find the ones you need.

Purpose of the Book

This is a book is for:

- people for whom the United States had turned into Gilead[i], and need to move now,
- people who expect to be at risk later, and want to plan ahead,
- people who would like to study or work remotely from here, with an option to make it permanent, and
- everyone else who wants to move to Canada.

There are roughly five ways to move to Canada, that often overlap:

- to just visit for a while,
- as a student,
- as a “Digital Nomad”,
- as a regular applicant, or
- as a true refugee.

This book is a resource guide for persons moving to Canada from the US, ranging from student visas to refugee applications. It was originally written for American citizens who wish to become Canadian permanent residents. The title comes from Margaret Atwood's dystopia *The Handmaid's Tale.*

I'm an incurable optimist, so I've also included some stories about the hard parts, just to keep things on an even keel.

Organization of the Book

This book surveys the various way an American can get into Canada, work in Canada, become a permanent resident and finally a citizen. It touches on a related subject, refugees in the US who need to flee to Canada.

It starts with the easy approaches, and works it way up to literally fleeing Gilead as a refugee. You'll arguably want to use the easiest you qualify for. Immigration anywhere is slow, bureaucratic and disorganized. Canada is no exception.

Each chapter provides an overview, containing references to available books and pages for you to drill down into.

Chapter 1 – Getting started

There are many groups in Canada who will help out. There is help:

- for LGBTQ+ people,
- for people in the health industries specifically, and
- for everyone else.

Unlike in the US, the federal and provincial governments want to help, too. They have written guides for people who want to move here.

This chapter is a list of groups that will help. With links, of course, as this *is* a resource guide.

Chapter 2 – Just for a While

Absolutely come and see what it's like. You can visit 6 months at a time without a visa, as long as you're either returning to Gilead or going on visit to another country.

There are also some special cases, like "Digital Migrants", described in Chapter 4, who can work remotely for a foreign firm while visiting Canada.

Chapter 3 – As a Student

There are at least four different ways you can come as a student, and you can start a regular application from here. The normal way is as a normal student, allowing you to work 20 hours a week while studying, and then up to three years after graduation.

The rest are part of *International Experience Canada*, a recruitment program:

- working holiday participants receive an open work permit that allows them to work anywhere in Canada to support their travel and stay;
- international co-op (internship) participants receive an employer-specific work permit that allows students to gain experience in their field of study; and
- young professional participants receive an employer-specific work permit to gain professional work experience within their field of study or career path.

Chapter 4 – As a "Digital Migrant"

You can live here and work remotely for a company in your home country, for up to 12 months. While you're here, you can start an application. After that period, you need to move to another country, usually as the same kind of "Digital Migrant".

There originally was an entrepreneur program for people starting businesses, but it failed.

Chapter 5 – International Experience Canada's Programs

Canada quietly recruits desirable immigrants with three programs, which are partially applicable to Americans:

- working holiday,
- international co-op, and
- young professionals.

Chapter 6, "Lost Canadians" and Family Reunification

Canada allows citizens and permanent residents to sponsor their spouse/partner and children, which we call "family reunion".

A related path to residency is by gaining citizenship because you descended from a Canadian ancestor. The rules for this used to cause "lost" Canadians, but we fixed that last year.

Chapter 7, NAFTA and Work Permits

The North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA (now CUSMA) includes an agreement that Canadians can work in the US, and Americans in Canada.

Similarly, there are regular work permits, for Canadian jobs an employer can't fill. Both allow an application for permanent residency.

Chapter 8 Express Entry

Express entry is a replacement for slow entry (:-))
It was introduced in 2015, as a streamlined path to permanent residence based on points for skills. Express means "about six months" on a good day.

Chapter 9 – As a True Refugee

This is a “last chance” approach, if nothing else works. It depends on Canada recognizing that you are not safe anywhere in Gilead, even if that’s where you grew up. The *very* thing this book is most about turns out to be the hardest way to move to Canada.

The first step is, showing you are a refugee, and at risk, after which you will be able to work and apply for permanent residence.

Chapter 10 – After You Get Here

Once you’re in Canada, there are still lots of things to learn, ranging from how to find an apartment to how to transfer your kids to a Canadian school.

Appendix A – Other resources

While researching, I found lots of useful references over and above immigration help. They live here.

This is Not Legal Advice

Consult the law firms found in section 1.11 for that. I recommend getting legal help to anyone moving from the US to Canada.

Acknowledgements

I’d like to thank folks, but then I’d have to mention their names. *You know who you are*: thanks!

This is a “Live” Document

I accept emails, problem reports, and “pull requests” if something has changed, if there is a new opportunity, or I’ve just plain got something wrong.

The readable document is found at https://tinyurl.com/Fleeing-Gilead in PDF, HTML and ePub. Right now, PDF and ePub are the most readable.

The repository for it is at https://codeberg.org/tokugawa-behr/

Anyone can create a problem report or make a suggestion at https://codeberg.org/tokugawa-behr/Fleeing-to-Canada/issues or by sending me email at tokugawa.behr@proton.me

Last Updates

- 16 June 2026 – Sponsoring parents and grandparents is suspended, spouses and children continue. There is a 10-year visitors visa available for parents and grandparents. See Section 6.2
- 13 May 2026 – Immigration will urgently process applications from “lost Canadians” if they’re trans and live in the US. See Section 6.1

i Atwood, Margaret, 1939-, The Handmaid's Tale. Anchor Books, a division of Penguin Random House LLC, 1998.

ii Duck.ai, Sketch of a “Handmaiden”, AI-generated image, 2026.

Chapter 1. Who Will Help

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It used to be draft-age men who needed to flee from the US to Canada. These days it’s *at least* 2SLGBTQI+ folks and existing refugees. It may soon be more: the number of working-age young women who said they wanted to emigrate from the US rose from 10% to 40% between 2014 and 2025. https://news.gallup.com/poll/697382/record-numbers-younger-women-leave.aspx

Gilead is coming true.

This chapter lists organizations who can help you, from the start. Subsequent chapters will list additional organizations and web documents related to the subject of the individual chapter.

As always, this book is not legal advice. For that, please see immigration lawyers, below.

1.1 “Please Move to Canada” Guides.

Both the federal and provincial governments want to attract immigrants. Until a political problem in 2024 with undergrads and housing, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) did too. This has already started to change back: Canada is now (in 2026) trying to expedite immigration processing for university professors and grad students from the US. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.

The **federal** booklet is 148 pages of everything they think you will need, entitled “Welcome to Canada, What you should know”. It ranges from planning to getting a bank account to applying for citizenship.

In effect, it's a resource guide, just like this.

> https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/migration/ircc/english/pdf/pub/welcome.pdf
>
> The Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada site has the current statuses of *everything*, all written in a Canadian dialect of "bland". A good sample and starting point is "Settling in Canada". https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/settle-canada.html

A typical **provincial** guide is **Ontario's** "Settlement.Org, Welcome To Ontario",.

> https://settlement.org/
>
> This is a web page of helpful information, including about provincial workshops you can attend for a deeper dive into some of the techniques you may need, and the whole gamut of the Ontario Settlement Services help program.

A related effort is the Ontario **Immigrant Nominee** Program (OINP).

> https://settlement.org/ontario/immigration-citizenship/immigrating-to-ontario/immigration-categories/what-is-opportunities-ontario-provincial-nominee-program-pnp/
>
> This is for people with job offers in Ontario, to "nominate" them to immigration.

Quebec has a similar program, "Choosing to Immigrate to Québec". It is oriented toward people who have conversational French and want to live in Quebec.

> https://www.quebec.ca/en/immigration/permanent/choose-quebec
>
> There are also programs for french-speakers who wish to work *elsewhere* in Canada, part of the federal "express immigration" program.
> https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/rural-franco-pilots/franco-immigration.html

The rest of the provinces' and territories' guides are

Province/Territory	Guide Title	URL
Alberta	Welcome to Alberta	https://www.alberta.ca/welcome-to-alberta.aspx
British Columbia	WelcomeBC Guide	https://www.welcomebc.ca/
Manitoba	Welcome to Manitoba	https://immigratemanitoba.com/
New Brunswick	Newcomer's Guide to New Brunswick	https://www.welcomenb.ca/content/wel-bien/en.html
Newfoundland and Labrador	Welcome to Newfoundland and Labrador	https://www.immigration.gov.nl.ca/welcome/
Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia Immigration Guide	https://novascotia.ca/immigration/welcome/

Province/Territory	Guide Title	URL
Ontario	Ontario's Guide for Newcomers	https://www.ontario.ca/page/welcome-ontario
Prince Edward Island	Welcome to Prince Edward Island	https://www.welcomepei.com/
Quebec	Quebec's Guide for Newcomers	https://www.quebec.ca/en/immigration
Saskatchewan	Welcome to Saskatchewan	https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/moving-to-saskatchewan
Northwest Territories	Welcome to the Northwest Territories	https://www.immigratenwt.ca/
Nunavut	Nunavut Immigration Guide	https://www.gov.nu.ca/family-services/information-immigrants
Yukon	Yukon Community Guide	https://yukon.ca/en/immigration

These are all quite general: their advice is good for almost every form of immigration.

Individuals also do “please move here” videos: I recommend Todd Maffin’s “I Am the Very Model of a Modern-Day Canadian”, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9k7OUowPPMQ

1.2 What Programs to Apply For.

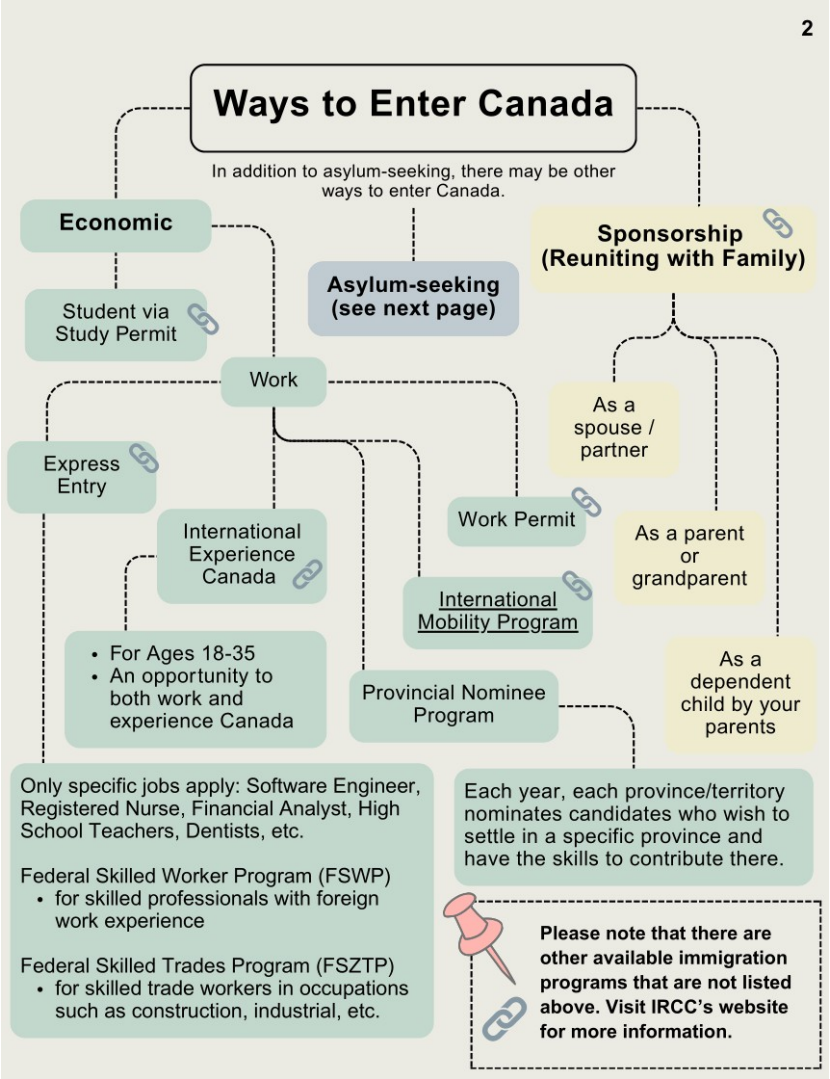
There are a ton of programs, and it can be unclear which ones meet your needs. Therefor, folks have provided guides.

- *moving2canada.com*
  https://moving2canada.com/immigration/canada-immigration-quiz/?utm_source=news.moving2canada.com&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_campaign=resources-for-newcomers-march-1-2026

  An interactive guide in the form of a quiz, to see what immigration program or strategy to use.

- University of Toronto *Safe Haven Toolkit*
  https://haven.utsc.utoronto.ca/index.php/a-guide-for-lgbtqi-asylum-seekers-crossing-the-canada-u-s-border/

  The Asylum lab at the UofT has written a lovely quick-reference toolkit to immigration, with flowcharts and maps. It is aimed primarily at the community of gender and sexually diverse people, and at asylum seekers. I used some of it to guide the structure of this resource guide. For example, page 2 says:


2
Ways to Enter Canada
In addition to asylum-seeking, there may be other ways to enter Canada.
Economic
Asylum-seeking (see next page)
Sponsorship (Reuniting with Family)
Student via Study Permit
Work
As a spouse / partner
Express Entry
International Experience Canada
Work Permit
As a parent or grandparent
International Mobility Program
• For Ages 18-35
• An opportunity to both work and experience Canada
Provincial Nominee Program
As a dependent child by your parents
Only specific jobs apply: Software Engineer, Registered Nurse, Financial Analyst, High School Teachers, Dentists, etc.
Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP)
• for skilled professionals with foreign work experience
Federal Skilled Trades Program (FSZTP)
• for skilled trade workers in occupations such as construction, industrial, etc.
Each year, each province/territory nominates candidates who wish to settle in a specific province and have the skills to contribute there.
Please note that there are other available immigration programs that are not listed above. Visit IRCC's website for more information.

- Project Haven also has a map of services, shelters, pride centers and IRCC offices https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1Ycmn2RnXbPcceYpjzie8sCQDumshNyA&ll=52.54292139355158%2C-87.64755717922108&z=4Map

1.3 Resources Especially for Gender and Sexually Diverse People, and for Women.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (really!)

https://www.prearrivalcanada.ca/e-library/

The government would like everyone who comes here to know what they're doing. In part that's to save themselves effort, and in part because Canadians work hard at being nice. They offer some on-line e-learning and a web/youtube e-library, and more importantly, they offer personalized planning sessions, immigrant workshops and live webinars i*n the real world*.

The 519.

https://www.the519.org/

The 519 is a broad-based support network for the whole community of gender and sexually diverse people and is supported in part by the City of Toronto. The name refers to its address, 519 Church Street in Toronto.

It has a rich collection of services, at least twenty-odd, specifically including:

- New to Canada – Support for LGBTQ+ Refugees and Newcomers. https://www.the519.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Resource-Guide.pdf
- Newcomer Information Session. https://www.the519.org/programs/nis/
- Mock Hearing Program For LGBTQ+ Refugee Claimants, to prepare you for an immigration hearing. https://www.the519.org/programs/mock-hearing-program/
- Legal Initiatives.
    - *The 519 Pro Bono Legal Advice Clinic*. LegalClinic@The519.org, https://www.the519.org/programs/legal-clinic/
    - Gender Affirming Care Legal Support Clinic. https://www.the519.org/programs/gender-affirming-care-legal-support-clinic/
    - Notary Clinic for 2SLGBTQ+ Communities. https://www.the519.org/programs/legalclinic-notary/
- Trans-Specific.
    - Racialized Trans Collective – bi-weekly meetup group for all racialized Trans identities to hang out and build community.
    - Trans People of Colour Project (TPOC) drop-in. https://www.the519.org/programs/trans-bipoc/
    - Trans ID Clinic. https://www.the519.org/programs/trans-id-clinic/
- Financial services. https://www.the519.org/programs/project-unlock/
- Health Services.
- Housing Services.
- Trans Youth Mentorship Program (TYMP).
- a large collection of YouTube videos,

and links to other organizations, like

- Volunteer Toronto. https://www.volunteertoronto.ca

- The Amnesty International LGBTI+ Caucus. https://amnesty.ca/what-we-do/lgbti-rights/

In particular, *The 519 Pro Bono Legal Advice Clinic* reports (paraphrased) that it can provide support to 2SLGBTQ+ Community Members through a one-time consultation with a lawyer, over telephone or video. Advice given is free of charge for advice and referral purposes only.

Capital Rainbow Refuge, in Ottawa.

https://capitalrainbow.ca/qrhp

This volunteer group aims at "Helping LGBTQI+ Refugees Arrive and Thrive". Notably, it provides a toolkit for preparing for refugee hearings, both as a downloadable document, and in the form of a do-it-yourself online toolkit for collecting the required information. (IMHO, this is a huge help).

Compass Refugee Center.

https://compassrefugee.ca/

https://compassrefugee.ca/programs/assist/refugee-claim-process-support/

A charitable organization, based in Kitchener, Ontario, helping immigrants navigate the refugee process in particular.

Egale.

https://egale.ca/awareness/consideringcanada/

Videos, notably "*Considering Canada: Information for LGBTQI Americans Looking to Move"*.

https://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Considering-Canada_-Immigration-Pathways-Handout_March31_2026.pdf

The Canadian branch of the organization includes awareness material for 2SLGBTQI+ people as part of its work.

Expatsi.

https://expatsi.com/

A company providing self-guided planning and workflow for Americans moving elsewhere

It has a free guide for LGBTQ Americans, https://expatsi.com/communities/lgbtqia/lgbtq-americans-moving-abroad-the-complete-guide/

Friends of Ruby, in Toronto.

http://www.friendsofruby.ca/

This group concentrates on shelter for 2SLGBQTIA+ youth, from 16 to 29, with a drop-in

center and a 100-bed shelter of their own.

Metropolitan Community Church.

http://www.mccchurch.org/

A supportive church for 2SLGBTQI+ people.

Rainbow Railroad.

https://www.rainbowrailroad.org/the-latest/a-future-in-the-balance

Rainbow Railroad helps LGBTQ individuals to move to other countries to escape persecution and violence, in countries where their sexual orientation or gender identity puts them at risk. They are now receiving about two-thirds of their requests from US transgender individuals.

Trans Rescue.

https://transrescue.org/

A Holland-based volunteer group who help people escape from dangerous countries. They have a lovely145-page guide at https://transrescue.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/How-To-Get-Out-Practical-Information-To-Help-You-Survive.pdf

1.4 Canadian Government Services.

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/come-canada-tool.html

This is from *Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship*. We'll be back to this site *many* times. An example is the tool above. It is a guided process to generate a visa application.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_By8F5jD_zM

As we mentioned above, they also provide Prearrival Canada, a guide for people to prepare to come here.

https://www.youtube.com/citimmcanada

They also have loads of YouTube videos in 9 categories of about 30 videos each.

The "please move here" guides we mentioned above from the federal and provincial governments are also valuable.

1.5 Refugee Sponsorship.

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/sponsor-refugee/private-sponsorship-program/refugees-information.html

Canada has a program for groups to "sponsor" existing refugees who are trapped in another country,

notably the US. The groups provide financial support for up to a year, or until the refugee can get employment. Refugee claimants can apply for a work permit, while accepted refugees can immediately work in Canada. It's called the "Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program". It's distinct from *family* sponsorships of relatives.

Groups organizing sponsorships include:

United Church of Canada Refugee Program.

https://united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/sponsor-refugee

Canada is one of only a few countries in the world with an LGBTIQ2+ Refugee program, and the United Church is one of only three national faith groups that can sponsor LGBTIQ2+ refugees.

Anglican Church Refugee Sponsorship.

https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/diocesan-life/social-justice-advocacy/welcoming-refugees/?lang=en

Mennonite Central Committee.

https://mcc.org/what-we-do/initiatives/migration-refugees/refugee-sponsorship-canada

Since 1979, MCC has helped existing refugees who have no prospect of returning home to start a new life in Canada through their sponsorship program.

Jewish Immigrant Aid Services (JIAS).

https://jiastoronto.org/

JIAS Toronto is the only Jewish Sponsorship Agreement Holder, allowing JIAS to sponsor existing refugees.

Rainbow Refugee .

https://www.rainbowrefugee.com/

Supports LGBTQ refugees and refugee claimants in British Columbia who are seeking protection in Canada, including individual support in navigating the Canadian system.

End of the Rainbow Foundation.

http://endoftherainbow.ca/

The End of the Rainbow Foundation in Calgary, Alberta creates refugee sponsorship circles (groups of five), and hosts support groups.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency.

https://help.unhcr.org/canada/how-to-apply-for-asylum-new/where-to-claim-asylum/

1.6 Resources for Health-industry People in Particular.

https://engageq.notion.site/infusionhosts

Because Canada has a shortage of doctors and nurses, a series of volunteer efforts has sprung into being. There may well be other industry-specific groups, but the one I know about is Canada's Healthcare Infusions.

This started in Nanaimo, British Columbia, and has 19 chapters across the country. It's been notably successful in Nova Scotia, at the other end of the country. There are approximately 6,000 positions open in the province Healthcare Infusions are doing their best to help Americans get a job and move here. *Nova Scotia Health* hired 50 Americans in the last year alone.

I know about it because it was written up by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in an article called "A no-brainer: Why some U.S. health-care workers are moving to Nova Scotia", at https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/american-healthcare-workers-moving-nova-scotia-9.7025866

They describe a five-step process in detail.
https://novascotiahealthcareinfusion.notion.site/Nova-Scotia-Healthcare-Infusion-297e74c53bba81a4b908cd47106894a6

1. Get Free Advice & Check out our Communities,
2. Get a Job
3. Start the Immigration Process
4. Move to Nova Scotia (or 18 other places)
5. You did it! You're here! Now What?

They have a discord server for several kinds of discussions, at https://engageq.notion.site/Join-the-correct-Discord-2f43dc1abb94801ebe5ff41529f494e1?pvs=25

It's working: "Hundreds of American nurses choose Canada over the U.S. under Trump", NPR, Feb 2026. https://www.npr.org/2026/02/25/nx-s1-5725354/nurses-emigrate-us-canada-trump
Both British Columbia and Ontario have streamlined their process of licensing US-trained nurses.

For doctors in particular.

Licensing of doctors can be tricky: there are programs to help internationally-trained physicians, described in How To Work in Canada as a Doctor: A Guide for Internationally Trained Physicians. https://moving2canada.com/features/how-to-work-in-canada-as-a-doctor/

But it's Easier in British Columbia

British Columbia has changed the rules so US-licensed doctors can be licensed in BC without further training or exams. US-registered nurses can also request direct licensing,

https://bchealthcareers.ca/

https://www.cicnews.com/2026/04/canadas-new-rules-are-fast-tracking-us-workers-in-one-industry-0473839.html

1.7 Resources for Everyone.

There are several groups who help with all sorts of immigration questions, not specifically with 2SLGBTQI+ people.

COSTI Immigrant Services.

https://www.costi.org/

https://learn.costi.ca/moodle/

Supported by Employment Ontario, it provides numerous online services, concentrating on career and employment counselling for workers,

Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta (CPLEA).

- https://www.lawcentralalberta.ca/en/refugee-hearing-preparation-guide

Provides legal support for the general public, and preparation for refugee hearings, many videos on a wide range of subjects.

CICS, Centre for Immigrant and Community Services.

https://www.cicscanada.com/en/

Volunteer charitable group in Toronto. Includes "Employment Programs for Newcomers and Internationally Trained Individuals".

CISO, Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization.

https://ociso.org/

Charitable group in Ottawa, providing the gamut of services.

Canada-U. S. Border Rights Clinic.

https://canadaborderclinic.org/

This group provides resources and free consultations for legal advice online or by phone

My Refugee Claim.

https://myrefugeeclaim.ca/en/orientation-booklet

The booklet is substantial, with 26 pages of help.
They also provide “ready tours”: free, virtual workshops at https://myrefugeeclaim.ca/en/ready-tours/

Reddit Discussion Groups.

Start by looking at their FAQs and pinned posts: they’re a collections of often-noisy opinions.

https://www.reddit.com/r/Canadiancitizenship/

https://www.reddit.com/r/ImmigrationCanada/

Todd Maffin.

YouTube videos about

- 11 Things Americans Must Know Before Moving to Canada! 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnux5kWrvPs
- Moving to Canada: A Guide for Americans, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=egRvtVTbPnY

He is one of the founders of “Canada’s Healthcare Infusion”.

And ...

If You’re Pregnant.

- https://moving2canada.com/living/healthcare/pregnant-and-moving-to-canada

1.8 Books about Moving to Canada.

There are a *lot* of books on moving here. At least two novels, one for children, and another a romance.

- SADE: We're Moving to Canada! by Yewande Daniel-Ayoade. https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/49263990-sade
- He's President And I'm Moving To Canada by Stephen Cadigan. https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/34328348-he-s-president-and-i-m-moving-to-canada

And a *plethora* of specific technical books about parts of the process, including one about tax planning.

- AMERICANS MOVING TO CANADA … - Tips To Maximize Your Assets, by Tariq Nadeem https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/5944894-americans-moving-to-canada---how-to-move-what-you-need-to-know-for-str

Goodreads, https://www.goodreads.com/ is a good place to start. When I last looked, there were about 120 books on the subject. It's popular!

If anyone has recommendations, please post them at https://codeberg.org/tokugawa-behr/Fleeing-to-Canada/issues and I'll list them here.

1.9 The Hard Part.

Because the US hasn't recently been an enemy country, we have weak support for American citizens moving to Canada. As I describe in Chapter 5, the normal process is centered around ordinary skilled applicants from the US looking for Canadian jobs. Immigration is used to and understands programs like Canada-US-Mexico-Free Trade Agreement (CUSMA), the successor to NAFTA.

In *Toronto Life's*, "Dear Americans: Moving to Canada is Hard", https://torontolife.com/life/dear-americans-moving-canada-hard, Steve Kupferman tells about his struggles, in moving here as a grad student and in applying for permanent residence. As he says, "Canada's immigration system is, for the most part, designed to deal with four different types of people: students, wealthy-ish business people, skilled workers and refugees".

That's a fair description: he came here as a grad student and had to work his way through a process aimed at "average" business applicants. That process is currently under both load-stress and political attacks by the far right. And Steve had an immigration consultant that was suspiciously cash-only.

All the programs from our governments are like that. Some people fit well, or are just lucky: they breeze through. Others put a foot wrong and get stuck in the mud.

1.10 Commercial Resources.

There are some commercial immigration sites of interest, part of a plethora of service providers and consultants.

Batista Migration Law Group.

https://www.migrationlawgroup.com/post/applying-for-a-canadian-visitor-visa-considerations-and-tips-for-avoiding-refusals

"Applying for a Canadian Visitor Visa? Considerations and Tips for Avoiding Refusals", a good resource on applying for a Canadian Visitor Visa, with dos and don'ts.

See section 1.9, Law Firms. https://www.migrationlawgroup.com/

Canadian Immigration Institute

https://www.canadianimmigrationinstitute.com/

A lawyer-led group with blogs, newsletters and YouTube talks. They provide for-money courses

for people who want to self-manage non-contentious immigration paths. One of these is on express entry, https://www.canadianimmigrationinstitute.com/express-entry-accelerator-1

ICC Immigration.

https://iccimmigration.ca/new-express-entry-category-for-physicians-with-canadian-work-experience-pr-pathway-explained-2026-update/

For-money consultancy, with a good article on an express entry program for doctors.

Immigration.ca.

https://immigration.ca/

A lawyer-sponsored advice site, sponsored by the Colin R. Singer law office.

moving2canada.com.

https://moving2canada.com/

This is a free consultancy, funded by contributions and commissions from the services it recommends (eg, The Bank of Nova Scotia). One of the services is it's own sister company, Outpost Recruitment.

It has a number of step-by-step guides, which will be mentioned throughout the book.

- A quiz on what immigration program or strategy to go for https://moving2canada.com/immigration/canada-immigration-quiz/?utm_source=news.moving2canada.com&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_campaign=resources-for-newcomers-march-1-2026
- A list of which programs are open https://moving2canada.com/immigration/pnp/pnp-canada-live-tracker/?utm_source=news.moving2canada.com&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_campaign=resources-for-newcomers-march-1-2026
- They provide a large collection of short videos at https://www.youtube.com/c/Moving2Canadainfo

Visa HQ.

https://www.visahq.com/canada/

A for-money consultancy with some initial steps and guides available free, funded by affiliate marketing and charging for visa application processing.

1.11 Immigration Law Firms.

For non-contentious immigration cases, there is a large community of immigration consultants. Their college has a list at https://college-ic.ca/

For the kind of cases we're looking at, there are a number of law firms specializing in immigration. They're there to help you keep from getting stuck in an overloaded and/or bureaucratic process..

Four firms who have specifically 2SLGBTQI+ experience, with their contact information, are:

Law Firm/Clinic	Focus Areas	Contact Information
Battista Migration Law Group	Immigration law, specifically for LGBTQ+ individuals, including family sponsorship and asylum claims. A contributor to changing Canadian immigration law to include same-sex families	160 Bloor St E Suite 1000, Toronto, ON. Phone: (416) 203-2899, URL: https://www.migrationlawgroup.com/
Smith Immigration Law	The counsel in "Jenkel vs Canada". Immigration law with a focus on LGBTQ+ immigration issues, including refugee claims and sponsorship applications. Frequent media expert on immigration issues	253 Danforth Ave, Suite 200, Toronto, ON. (647) 365-1801, https://www.smithimmigrationgroup.com/
Ivan Steele Law Office	Gay and Lesbian Family and Immigration Law- Specializes in LGBTQ+ immigration and family law. Personal experience as a gay immigrant	473 Sackville St., Toronto, ON M4X 1T5 ivansteele@ivansteelelaw.com 647-342-0568
Marku & Lee	LGBTQIA+ Immigration Advocacy-Trauma-informed care. Specialized in refugee claims and appeals	Damey Lee & Hana Marku, damey@markulee.com hana@markulee.com

The Canadian Bar Association, Ontario Immigration law section and Ontario Immigration Lawyers Association have membership lists at, respectively,

- https://cba.org/ontario
- https://cila.co/directory/

A colleague speaks well of Battista, and Smith was the lawyer in Jenkel v. Canada (Citizenship and Immigration), 2025 FC 1178 (CanLII), which was a rare case of Canada giving refuge to a US resident.

Organizations like the519 will provide referrals to firms they have found helpful.

If anyone has specific experiences, post them at https://codeberg.org/tokugawa-behr/Fleeing-to-Canada/issues and I'll add them here.

1.12 Planning Ahead.

There are some slow things that you can start early, all discussed in Chapter 10, *After You Get Here*:

- A place to live, described in Section 10.1

- A bank account, Section 10.2
- Travel medical insurance until you qualify for medicare, Section 10.3
- A school for your kids, Section 10.6

If you can, start these and anything else you think of before you move here. It will save you time and angst during the move.

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In Short.

There are a *surprisingly* large number of sources of help, most of them free. That's very different from when I first looked at this.

I started collecting with *the519* in Toronto: I'd talk with them first, and immigration lawyers second. Then everyone else.

Chapter 2. Just for A While

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Coming to Visit and Reconnoiter

Do come and visit. Ontario used to describe itself as “friendly, foreign and near”, and that’s a good description. There are even a few programs that allow you to work while you’re vacationing.

2.1 For Tourism

Canada is a nice place to live. You can do everything from summer water-skiing to winter polar-bear watching in Churchill, Manitoba.
Canadians joke a *lot* about it being cold. In reality, most Canadians live in the part that’s below the top of France. Indeed, even the western provinces overlap heavily with France. About the lower 140 miles of Manitoba, for example.

There are a plethora of sites and brochures about visiting. For example, the national parks are described at https://travel.gc.ca/canadian-tourism. All sorts of things to do in Ontario are described at https://www.destinationontario.com/en-ca

2.2 For Reconnaissance

From our point of view, though, the best reason to visit Canada is to do a “recce”. Start with the federal and provincial tourist guides above and in Chapter 1, and plan a vacation that takes you to the areas you want to know more about.

Make a list of things you want to find out about in Canada.

- Information about cities and provinces.
- Rental costs in the cities you’re interested in.
  Toronto and Vancouver can be pricey, especially right downtown. On the other hand, if you want a one-bedroom apartment in an inner suburb of Toronto you'll pay about $950 US.
- Support organizations you want to know more about, like the519’s Newcomer Information Session
- Canadian professional societies if you’re an engineer, a nurse, or the like.

- Universities for your kids.
- Churches.
- Canadian branches of your company.
- Canadian immigration lawyers.

Visit family, friends, or friends of friends, be a tourist and have fun, while you get a feeling for how you'd like to live in Canada.

Resources

- Todd Maffin's video, "How to Speed-Date Canada", about a "weekend (April 24-26, 2026) where you can come visit [...] the Nanaimo BC area, as maybe a place you could move with your family to". https://2026.nanaimoinfusion.ca
- The519's Newcomer Information Session, https://www.the519.org/programs/nis/
- To know what to prepare for, the federal government's "Welcome to Canada, What you should know", https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/migration/ircc/english/pdf/pub/welcome.pdf
- Ontario's "Settlement.Org, Welcome To Ontario", https://settlement.org/ and the other provincial guides in Section 1.1
- Tod Maffin's videos, "I Am the Very Model of a Modern-Day Canadian", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9k7OUowPPMQ and Moving to Canada: A Guide for Americans, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=egRvtVTbPnY
- IRCC prearrival guides, https://www.prearrivalcanada.ca/e-library/
- For medical people, https://engageq.notion.site/infusionhosts

2.3 What *Not* to Do

Be careful not to tell fibs to customs. Those can mess you up later.

For example, don't say you're working unless you have preregistered into one of three specific programs:

- "Digital Nomad" Visitor-Visa
- Working Holiday Visa (International Experience Canada)
- International Co-Op (IEC)

Don't bring all your prescriptions, university degrees, resumes, or the like on what is supposed to be a visit. Similarly, don't bring a year's supply of a prescription if you're only going to be here for two weeks.

Instead, tell customs the truth. If you're coming here on vacation, the federal and Ontario guides will help you make a list of destinations. Come and visit Canadian friends if you have some, or have some other real reason, like a campus visit with a prospective student.

The criteria customs use include:

- genuine visitor intent – you aren't obviously lying about going home,
- sufficient financial resources – you have enough money or credit to pay for yourself, and a
- clear exit plan – you are going home, or if you're going to another country afterwards, you have a ticket.

Resources

- Applying for a Canadian Visitor Visa? Considerations and Tips for Avoiding Refusals https://www.migrationlawgroup.com/post/applying-for-a-canadian-visitor-visa-considerations-and-tips-for-avoiding-refusals

2.4 Three Variants on "Visitor" Visas

Each is expanded upon in their respective chapter. Can I shrink these?

As a "Digital Nomad"

Officially, there is no "digital nomad" visa, but really that just a more meaningful name for a formal visitor visa, called a Temporary Resident Visa (TRV). This is described in Chapter 4, Digital Nomads..

On a Working Holiday

Canada has an "International Experience Canada (IEC) Working Holiday Program". It is aimed at young professionals to work and travel, to gain Canadian experience. It is in Chapter 5

Many countries have programs like these first two variants, so either or both can be used as a part of a "grand tour".

Resources

- Moving2canada has a rather complete (56-page!) guide on working holidays, Moving to Canada through IEC's Working Holidays program.

As a Co-Op Student (Internship)

International Experience Canada also has a program for post-secondary co-op programs, for people registered at a university, college, vocational school or a profession-specific school, like a law school.

It too is described in Chapter 5, *International Experience Canada Programs.*

2.5 For "The Grand Tour"

If you prearrange visitor visas, you could visit Canada, then France, then Germany, and then perhaps Canada again, for six months to a year in each country.

The term refers to the old British custom of sending their sons (always sons) for a tour of Europe after university, with meaningful stays in multiple countries.

Canadians also have a tradition of being “snowbirds”. Those are people who live in Canada in the summer, then fly south for the winter. You can join them.

2.6 Retirees

There is a long-term visa for grandparents, called a “super visa”.

- https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/visit-canada/parent-grandparent-super-visa.html

For people *without* Canadian relatives, you’re in the same place as non-retirees: you can stay up to six months on a visitor visa, but then you need to go somewhere else for six months. There is more detail about this in Chapter 4.

There are a few Todd Maffin videos for older folks who have a retirement income and want to live here:

- How to Move to Canada As a Retiree, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgHmZRR1DSY
- Some advice for American seniors, wanting to move to Canada, 2025 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p49ibOA29QA
- Also there are Reddit discussions, which are less authoritative but more topical.
    - https://www.reddit.com/r/IWantOut/
    - https://www.reddit.com/r/ImmigrationCanada/

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In Short

Come as a visitor and have a look. Use that to help you decide what your next steps will be.

Chapter 3. As a Student

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Why study in Canada? it's a direct route to residency. There are several ways to study and work your way to residency in Canada, so here's what you need to know.

There are a number of ways to study and work in Canada, and all of them allow you to apply for permanent residence and then citizenship, once you’re 18.

They are

- A study permit, available to grade-school, secondary and university students. It allows limited “work-study permissions”, but doesn’t count as “Canadian experience” on an immigration application.
- A post-graduation work permit, available after completing a university or college degree. This *does* count as Canadian experience, from age 18 onward.
- An international co-op or internship placing, available to university and college students, limited to a single employer.
- A young professional program, to get an employer-specific work permit to gain professional experience in their field.

For most people, the sequence is straightforward:

- study permit
- degree or diploma
- post-graduation work permit
- permanent residence application.

3.1 Study Permits

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/study-permit.html

These are available for people attending all primary and secondary schools in Canada, plus a long list of post-secondary institutions.
The various pages in the IRCC's instruction on how to get a study permit will have road-maps, like the one on the right, to help you keep organized and not miss a required step.

The student will need to get a letter of acceptance from the school, and, for undergrads, a letter from the province. Both will need a passport and proof that have funding to live on or to buy a return ticket, depending on where you're coming from.

For anyone under 18 coming here by themselves, they'll also need a signed custodianship declaration.

They can apply from inside Canada, that's a common process.

Students are allowed to work. There is no restriction on on-campus work, and a limit of 24 hours a week, during the school year, off-campus.

For work you will need to apply for a Social Insurance Number (SIN). That's the equivalent of a US Social Security Number. We describe this in Chapter 10, *Afterwards*.

Oddly, work done under a study permit doesn't count toward "Canadian experience" in a regular immigration application. Work done under a post-graduation work permit *does* count.

Resources

- New Measures Prioritize Graduate and Doctoral Student Recruitment https://www.fragomen.com/insights/canada-new-measures-prioritize-graduate-and-doctoral-student-recruitment.htm
- Graduate study permits: cap exemption https://beingcanada.com/graduate-study-permits-cap-exemption-and-2-week-phd-processing/
- Canada Streamlines Path for Graduate Students https://theimmigrater.com/canada-streamlines-path-for-graduate-students-faster-processing-and-pal-exemptions-highlighted/

- From Tuition to Rent. The Complete Financial Checklist for International Students. https://moving2canada.com/study/financial-checklist-for-international-students/
- Processing times: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/check-processing-times.html

3.2 Post-Graduation Work Permits (PGWP)

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/work/after-graduation.html

After graduating from a Canadian university, college or flight school, you can apply for a post-graduation work permit within 180 days of graduation. Once you've applied, you can work until you get a decision on this permit.
If you've been in a program that lasted more than 2 years, the permit will be for three years. For shorter ones, the work period is the length of your study period, unless the course was less than 8 months: those short courses don't qualify.

This work counts as "Canadian experience" in a regular application.

3.3 International Experience Canada (IEC) programs

These are described in more detail in Chapter 5, *International Experience Canada*

One relevant to students is an **International Co-op or Internship**

This is for people enrolled in a co-op program that allows them to do some of their work terms in Canada

3.4 Caveats

Those are the main paths for a student. However, the rules change under political pressure. For example, Canada took *far* too many foreign undergrads up to 2024, so the quota was abruptly lowered. We added a provincial attestation letter requirement and started checking that acceptance letters were actually legit. Some fake "colleges" have now been shut down. That increased competition for fewer spaces.

For Graduate Students

More recently, it flipped the other way. US professors have publicly fled to Canadian universities. At the same time, Canadian grad students in the US are either being expelled or defunded. See https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/graduate-student.html

The announced changes includes

- no limit on the number of grad students admitted per year

- a two-week go/nogo decision if you're a doctoral student,
- no provincial sign-off needed for grad students,
- bringing your family is allowed,
- no cap on the number of grad students admitted, and
- as before, you can stay and work afterwards.

Since these changes are still under discussion with no confirmed timeline, you should plan your application around the current rules. But check the government website before you submit, and tell me if there's something I missed.

It's *still* a big shock to change countries

Pari Mokradi writes "I was an international student chasing stability, but Canada made me question who I was" - CBC News https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/first-person-international-student-9.7076884

Pari describes ending up in working at a call center after graduation, and experiencing isolation and financial hardship. She writes "What carried me through weren't the milestones of earning a degree, landing a job or receiving my citizenship. It was the small acts of care: Alycia, who gave me a pillow; Karun, who told me to own my story; Gilles and the Writers' Collective, who showed me I didn't have to erase myself to belong".

She became a citizen in 2025.

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In Short

Becoming a student in Canada used to be trivial. Then it became hard for students from Africa and Asia (yes, that's racist). Then it became a bit easier if you were a grad student. Now, when we've noticed that the US was expelling foreign grad students, it became easier yet.

It's not trivial any more, but it's still an excellent way to get to live in Canada.

Chapter 4. As a “Digital Nomad”

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You can live here and work remotely for a company in another country, for as long as 12 months. While you’re here, you can start an application to immigrate.

4.1 However, You are Officially a Visitor (!)

Canada does not have anything official for digital nomads: a more formal kind of visitor’s visa allows you to work for a remote employer for up to a year. It used to be six months, but that was increased.

You’re going to be here longer than 180 days, so you will need to pay for a Temporary Resident Visa (TRV). That’s the official name for the category that visitor’s visas fall into. Applying is done by filling out a web form, providing information and paying the fee with a debit or credit card.

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/visit-canada/apply-visitor-visa.html

https://ircc.canada.ca/english/information/applications/visa.asp

The requirements for a visitor visa includes:

- Valid passport.
- Proof you work with a foreign employer.
- Proof of financial support (ie, pay or bank records).
- Purpose of visit documentation.
- Evidence of intent to return to home country, like an airline ticket or having a home in the US.
- Have a valid health insurance policy covering your entire stay in Canada.
- A possible medical examination.
- A possible background check.

You should get a detailed letter from your employer saying what you’re going to be doing, and saying that no Canadian work will be done.

4.2 It’s a Kind of Temporary Resident Visa

A visitor’s visa is a “single-entry” visa. There is also a “multiple-entry” Temporary Resident Visa (TRV), which you can pre-request.

This uses the same process as getting a single-entry visa: you say you’re a digital nomad, that you’ll be visiting regularly, and that you want a multiple-entry visa. That seems to go in the “purpose of my visit” and “other” fields of an Application for Temporary Resident Visa (IMM 5257) form.

These typically are valid for up to 10 years, and allow you to cross back and forth. You still have to meet the requirements and stay for a limited time per visit, but these make it clearer to the immigration officers when they find you entering Canada repeatedly.

Each time you enter Canada, you’ll need to show customs your visa, say that you’re a digital nomad and answer their follow-up questions, so they know you’re legit.

By the way, if you’re thinking of leaving, pulling a u-turn in the middle of the Ambassador bridge and coming back, don’t. That’s just a *tiny* bit suspicious (:-)). Instead, consider being a “snowbird”: live in Canada in the summer and somewhere warm in the winter.

Resources

- https://leglobal.law/countries/canada/canada-remote-work-faq/
- https://www.bdo.ca/insights/remote-work-and-immigration-law-managing-risk-for-business-visitors-and-digital-nomads-to-the-u-s
- https://moving2canada.com/immigration/digital-nomad-in-canada/
- https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/visit-canada/apply-visitor-visa.html
- https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/documents/pdf/english/kits/forms/imm5257/01-09-2023/imm5257e.pdf
- https://www.ircc.canada.ca/english/helpcentre/answer.asp?qnum=417
- Instructions given to immigration officers: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/operational-bulletins-manuals/service-delivery/digital-nomads.html
- Processing times: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/check-processing-times.html

4.3 Extending a Temporary Resident Visa

From inside Canada, you can apply to stay longer, which is called “applying for a visitor record”.

- https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/visit-canada/extend-stay.html

- https://www.immigrationphysicianottawa.ca/site/blog-ottawa/2025/07/17/how-extend-visitor-visa-canada

You can extend a TRV, but only for a good reason. The common reasons for requesting an extension are:

- getting more time in Canada for family reasons,
- ongoing medical treatment,
- waiting for pending immigration applications,
- being a spouse or partner of a Canadian or permanent resident, but not yet eligible for an open work permit, and
- to stay in a lawful status while planning the next immigration step.

You should:

- Apply at least 30 days before your status expires
- Demonstrate "intent to leave" — this is critical and often the reason for refusals
- Maintain strong ties to your home country
- Provide detailed financial information and a letter of explanation.

4.4 Other Nomadic Things

Many other countries have digital nomad visas: more information is at Wikipedia, in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_nomad

There are at least two books about being a nomad:

The Digital Nomad Handbook by Lonely Planet, as an a eBook is available from Kobo at https://www.kobo.com/ca/en/ebook/the-digital-nomad-handbook?sId=1a9f88fe-7812-4629-82cd-d4a4dda709d9&ssId=OK6scrhYzg1HX1yjSsmKI&cPos=1

Amazon has that and *Digital Nomads For Dummies* (English Edition), in several formats.

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In Short

You can live here and work remotely for reasonable periods, and get an application for permanent resident started while you're doing that.

Chapter 5. International Experience Canada

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Canada is recruiting for immigrants.
Canada is turning away immigrants.
Both are true, sometimes even for the same person at the same time. We have to recruit, to keep our population from shrinking. In the past, Canada has had to take in about 700,00 new people a year. That's about 1.75% of the total population. The 2025/6 targets are for around 380,000 permanent residents.

This chapter is about Canada's program to provide "young people with opportunities to gain international work experience, learn about different cultures, and build professional networks across borders". In other words, it's about *recruiting*.

Alas, the program is popular, and therefor oversubscribed. This year 40,143 candidates applied, out of which just 6,362 IEC spots were distributed by lottery. About 15%.

5.1 From the US

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/work-canada/iec.html

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/work-canada/iec/eligibility.html

It's even *harder* from the US.

The US is a preferred source for immigrants, but for some reason they didn't do as most countries do, and sign a bilateral *youth mobility agreement* with Canada. I speculate that was to keep us from recruiting their best students.

To deal with countries without youth mobility agreements, Recognized Organizations (RO) were created, and therefor get used for US citizens. It always was something of a kluge: it works, but you need to be extra patient.

The ROs in turn deal with a number of US organizations, so-called Designated Referral Partners

Some of these are, in no particular order:

Organization	Key Features	
InterExchange	Work anywhere in Canada, support services in Toronto and Vancouver – Working	https://www.interexchange.org/

Organization	Key Features	
	Holiday. Targets the US	
JENZA (SWAP)	RO Nomination programs, job placement assistance – Working Holiday– Young Professionals	https://jenza.com/experiences/working-holidays/work-canada-ro/
Stepwest	Resort-focused jobs (ski resorts, hospitality) – Working Holiday– Young Professionals	https://www.stepwest.com/
GO International	Personal support, job placement – Working Holiday	https://gointernational.ca/
A-Way to Work	Specialized in rural/agricultural placements – Working Holiday– Young Professionals	https://awaytowork.ca/
IAESTE, International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience	Technical and professional opportunities, – Working Holiday– Young Professionals– International Co-op	https://iaeste.org/
Languages Canada	Combines language learning with work experience – Working Holiday	https://www.languagescanada.ca/en/
International Internship Network	Working Holidays and International Co-op	https://internship-network.org/
INTERNeX International Exchange	Working Holiday– Young Professionals	https://internexworld.com/
AIESEC (Association for the International Exchange of Students in Economics and Commerce)	Primarily for international students in economics and commerce, – Employer–specific work permit	https://www.aiesec.ca/
		https://www.ciee.org/about/blog/update-ciee-internship-programs
Academic Internship Council (AIC)	Focuses on academic internships – Employer-specific work permit	https://www.myscholarhq.com/academic-internship-council-2025/
		https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhMUu40QU8Mwi1uG8fNltBUOoxMhFIRlb
Mennonite Central Committee of Canada /	Employer-specific work permit	https://mcc.org/get-involved/volunteer/ivep

Organization	Key Features
International Volunteer Exchange Program (MCC/IVEP)	

The country quotas typically get filled to between 90% and 95%. Most ROs see a fill rate between 85% and 95%.

Resources, in General

These are about steps common to all three of the programs below.

- IEC Documents Checklist 2026: What You Need to Apply
- https://dfimmigration.ca/how-to-immigrate-to-canada/iec-work-permit/
- https://www.matkowsky.ca/iec-international-experience-canada
- https://borderslawfirm.com/corporate-immigration/work-permits/international-experience-canada/
- https://hmdavocats.com/canadian-work-permit-lawyer/international-experience-canada-iec/
- Processing times: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/check-processing-times.html

5.2 Working Holiday

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/work-canada/iec.html

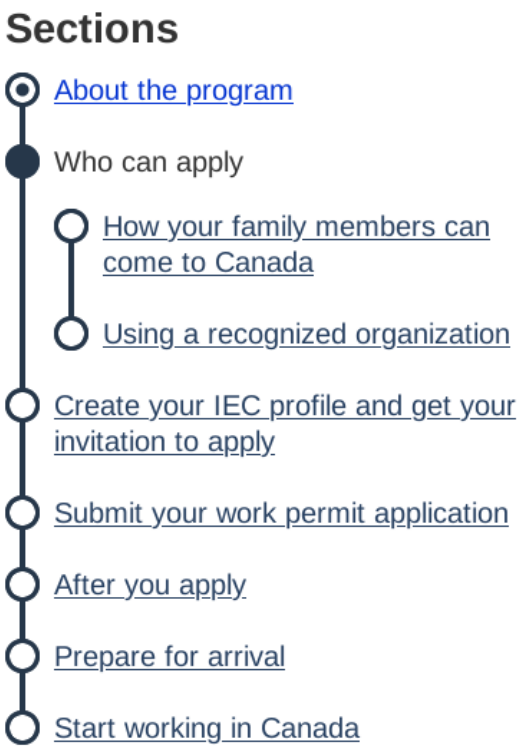
International Experience Canada (IEC) has three program for gaining Canadian experience, starting with “Working Holidays”.

This is aimed at young professionals to work and travel. It allows for up to two years or temporary work with Canadian employers, and combines a work permit with a visa.

Time working in this program counts towards Canadian experience. It used to add points toward express entry as well, but now only the experience itself counts.

Resources

- Moving2canada has a lovely (56-page!) guide on working holidays, *Moving to Canada through IEC’s Working Holidays program*, https://moving2canada.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Checklist-IEC-WH-9.pdf
  A shorter checklist from them, *Working Holiday Canada: Your Ultimate Guide to work permits*, the work-permit part is https://moving2canada.com/immigration/iec/working-holiday-visa-in-canada/


Sections
About the program
Who can apply
How your family members can come to Canada
Using a recognized organization
Create your IEC profile and get your invitation to apply
Submit your work permit application
After you apply
Prepare for arrival
Start working in Canada

- Pvtistes has guides on working holidays, in both French and English, at https://pvtistes.net/ The name comes from the French acronym for Working-Holiday visas, PVT.

5.3 International Co-Op

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/work/intern.html

If you are in a program that requires you to do co-op or intern terms, you can do them in Canada under this program.

International co-op is for students who are enrolled in a program that requires all the students complete a work placement. The work can be in Canada if the school and employer agree.

You will need the permission of your school and employer, and once again, you will have to apply through a "recognized organization".

As with other student visas, work done under a study permit doesn't count toward "Canadian experience". However is the school is Canadian, like the University of Waterloo, all the work terms *do* count toward Canadian experience.

5.4 Young Professionals

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/work-canada/iec.html

This for people looking to get Canadian experience, by getting a job here. The job you're offered must count toward your "professional development", and fall into one of these training categories:

Category	Description	Examples
0	Management occupations	Advertising, marketing and public relations managers Financial managers
1	Occupations that usually require a university degree	Financial advisors Software engineers
2	Occupations that usually require • a college diploma • apprenticeship training of 2 or more years, or • supervisory occupations	Computer network and web technicians Medical laboratory technologists
3	Occupations that usually require • a college diploma • apprenticeship training of less than 2 years, or • more than 6 months of on-the-job training	Bakers Dental assistants and dental laboratory assistants

For the precise occupations, https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/find-national-occupation-code.html has a search function

For the eligibility rules, see https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/work-canada/iec/eligibility.html

Time working in this program counts towards Canadian experience. It used to add points toward express entry as well, but now only the experience counts.

This is a live document. These links will change. Always refer to the government pages for current rules. And please file an issue at https://codeberg.org/tokugawa-behr/Fleeing-to-Canada/issues so I'll know what needs updating.

In Short

Canada has bilateral agreements to allow Canadians to work elsewhere, and people from those countries to work here. It's popular, so have a look and see if you fit a part of this recruiting scheme.

Chapter 6. Lost Canadians and Family Reunification

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Canadian citizenship rules changed in 2025, when people who *should* have inherited Canadian citizenship from their parents and grandparents were added back into the rules.

For family members who didn’t inherit citizenship, Canadian citizens and landed immigrants can still sponsor their spouse/partner and children to come to Canada.

Reunification is always backlogged, and in Jul8 2022 immigration suspended the reunification program for parents and grandparents. As a partial mitigation, there is a ten-year “super visa” for parents and grandparents.

6.1 Citizenship by Birth and “Lost Canadians”

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/canadian-citizenship/become-canadian-citizen/eligibility/already-citizen.html

In 2009, a not-very-nice Prime Minister stripped away rights to inheriting citizenship that had been established in 1977. In 2025, we fixed that. Now, you can apply to gain/regain Canadian citizenship.

A Canadian citizen parent can always pass on citizenship to a child born outside of Canada if that parent was either 1) born in Canada or 2) naturalized before the birth of their child. The 2009 changes blocked people who were

- born to Canadian parents who were also born abroad (ie, the second generation abroad,)
- adopted by first-generation Canadians born abroad.

We fixed that. Now a Canadian parent born or adopted abroad can pass citizenship to their child born abroad before 2025. If the child was born after 2025 the parent would need to “spend three years in Canada prior to the child's birth or adoption”

In short, you’re already a citizen if you’re

- born in Canada
- born outside Canada and your parents were Canadian citizens at time of birth, or

- born outside of Canada, to parents whose ancestors were considered Canadian, under the same rules.

If any of these is true, you can apply for a citizenship certificate, and use that to apply for a Canadian passport. You'll need

- birth certificates,
- your parents' or other ancestor's Canadian citizenship documents, and
- proof of your parent's status at time of your birth.

It's not actually *hard*, but there is a lot of just plain work, described in

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/application-forms-guides/guide-0001-application-citizenship-certificate-adults-minors-proof-citizenship-section-3.html

This is popular: any whole families are applying. This caused the caseload to increased by 10:1 over previous years, and the processing times went as high as six months.

Fortunately, the process has been streamlined. Now an application will be given a first sanity-check, and if they're signed, have photographs and payments, and have a complete application form filled out, they'll be accepted into the process. If you're missing some part of the list, you'll get the chance of submitting it. If you're missing one of the important parts above, though, you'll have to start over.

This change saves a lot of time for the applicant, as people aren't starting over from scratch if they're missing anything or have misunderstood what was asked for. It's also a lot less repeated work for immigration.

Briefly, in June 2026, Immigration asked 100 individuals who had citizenship papers already granted to return them for further scrutiny. This was promptly reversed. The request was also unconstitutional, so the reversal was not a surprise.

Resources

- https://www.cicnews.com/2026/05/applying-for-proof-of-canadian-citizenship-here-are-10-tips-from-a-lawyer-0575399.html
- https://www.cicnews.com/2026/05/where-americans-are-finding-the-documents-needed-to-prove-canadian-citizenship-by-descent-0575487.html
- https://www.cicnews.com/2026/05/shiloh-jolie-is-among-the-americans-who-are-now-u-s-canadian-dual-citizens-after-canada-changed-its-citizenship-law-0575549.html
- https://www.cicnews.com/2026/05/six-online-tools-americans-are-using-to-find-the-ancestry-for-canadian-citizenship-by-descent-0576174.html
- https://www.cicnews.com/2026/06/forced-surrender-of-canadian-citizenship-certificates-may-be-unconstitutional-experts-say-0676863.html

Changes for Trans People

You can now apply *urgently* for a citizenship certificate if you face potential harm or hardship because of "sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or, membership in particular groups". This is especially true of trans people: some have reported processing in weeks rather than in months.

You will need to write a covering letter and provide supporting information, such as a doctor's note.

- https://ircc.canada.ca/english/helpcentre/answer.asp?qnum=1558&top=5
- https://www.cicnews.com/2026/05/canada-is-fast-tracking-citizenship-certificates-for-trans-americans-0575258.html

Once processed, lost Canadians can get a passport with a sex of M, F or X.

This the first concrete evidence that Immigration has taken notice of the danger of remaining in the US if you are a trans citizen or resident.

Resources

- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada pages on inherited citizenship
  - https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/canadian-citizenship/act-changes/rules-2025.html
  - https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2025/12/bill-c-3-an-act-to-amend-the-citizenship-act-2025-comes-into-effect.html
- 2025 changes, https://immigration.ca/claiming-canadian-citizenship-by-descent-under-canadas-new-citizenship-act-bill-c-3/
- Canada's digitized census records (which are available to Googling and AI bots) https://www.canada.ca/en/library-archives/collection/research-help/genealogy-family-history/censuses.html
- A calculator to see if you're eligible, https://www.canadavisa.com/citizenship-by-descent.html
- Instructions about proving a line of decent, https://www.cicnews.com/2026/05/where-americans-are-finding-the-documents-needed-to-prove-canadian-citizenship-by-descent-0575487.html
- https://www.cascadiadaily.com/2026/feb/28/new-law-opens-door-to-citizenship-for-lost-canadians-in-bellingham-and-beyond
- borderlines podcast #194 – *Are You Now a Canadian?* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1siBJvxqc9Q
- discussion group at https://www.reddit.com/r/Canadiancitizenship/ Also see their FAQs
- facebook group, *Canadian Citizenship by Descent (Bill C-3)* at https://www.facebook.com/groups/501813032715040

- Processing times: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/check-processing-times.html

6.2 Family Reunification and Sponsorship

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/family-sponsorship/spouse-partner-children/who-you-can-sponsor.html

Sponsorship for refugees is different, see Chapter 9, *As a True Refugee.*

Typical *family* reunification is citizens and permanent residents sponsoring their spouse/partner and children. There is a related mechanism to grant a "super visa" for parents/grandparents to live in Canada for ten years at a time, to replace the option of sponsoring parents and grandparents.

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/visit-canada/parent-grandparent-super-visa/eligibility.html

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/visit-canada/parent-grandparent-super-visa/forms-documents.html

Resources

- immigration.ca
  - https://immigration.ca/family-sponsorship-immigration-overview/
  - https://immigration.ca/what-are-the-options-for-bringing-parents-and-grandparents-to-canada-in-2026/
- https://moving2canada.com/immigration/family-sponsorship/
- https://www.fhplawyers.com/kelowna-legal-services/immigration-law/canada/spousal-sponsorships-and-family-reunification.html
- https://www.titanlaw.ca/family-sponsorship/
- https://www.canadavisa.com/cohen-immigration-law.html
- Processing times: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/check-processing-times.html

This is a live document. These links will change. Always refer to the government pages for current rules. And please file an issue at https://codeberg.org/tokugawa-behr/Fleeing-to-Canada/issues so I'll know what needs updating.

In Short

If you have Canadian ancestors, look and see if you’re a Canadian *already*. If not, look at a family sponsorship.

Chapter 7. NAFTA and Other Work Permits

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The North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA (now CUSMA), created a "low-barrier" approach to getting a "TN" visa. Those visas are a particularly popular ways to allow people to work temporarily in Canada. Non-CUSMA work permits also exist, for things like transfers or US hiring by Canadian employers.

All allow you to apply for permanent residence, but...

7.1 Contradictio in Terminis

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/mandate/corporate-initiatives/levels/supplementary-immigration-levels-2026-2028.html

… to *get* any of these temporary work permits, you are expected to demonstrate you're planning on returning to the US. The idea is to allow US citizens to work in Canada without affecting Canadian employment levels. That means you must have "temporary intent", or you'd be turned away for "stealing Canadian jobs".

Contradictorily, if someone has "established strong roots in their communities, are paying taxes and are helping to build the strong economy Canada needs", then we'll be inviting you to stay. For 2026 and 2027, the government will "accelerate the transition of up to 33,000 temporary workers to permanent residency". If you're an attractive immigrant who originally *didn't* want to stay, we'd *like* you to stay.

In short, if you apply for any of these temporary permits, you *need* to demonstrate you have strong ties to the US and will return there. You can change your mind … later.

7.2 CUSMA (formerly NAFTA)

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/operational-bulletins-manuals/temporary-residents/foreign-workers/international-free-trade-agreements/cusma.html

This is the “TN” visa you’ve probably heard about.

It’s good, but it’s also under “negotiation” by untrusted parties. TN visas *to the US* may well be squeezed or dropped circa July 2026. Following on from that, Canada will have to decide if it wants to limit or phase them out as well, probably driven by whether we see job losses in Canada.

CUSMA visas are good because they’re easy to get if you have a degree. Your employer doesn’t have to prove they haven’t found a Canadian for the joby.

CUSMA offers distinct work categories for professionals, intra-company transferees and others. Each category has unique criteria.

Some examples of the professional or “specialized knowledge” categories are accountants, engineers, computer systems analysts, lawyers, architects and management consultants. The complete lists (there are two) are at

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/work-canada/special-instructions/business-people.html

A **professiona**l from one of those two lists must have

- a job offer,
- a minimum education, usually a bachelor’s degree in their field, and
- licensing where required. For example, nursing and teaching require you have a license.

An **Intra-Company Transferee** needs

- to be a US citizen, and
- be employed at a US firm which has a legitimate branch, affiliate, or subsidiary in Canada.

They need to be in a “specialized knowledge” or management job from the lists. Finally, they need to have worked for the US company for over a year.

Either of these will count as “Canadian experience” when you apply for permanent residency. You’ll fall into at least the *Federal Skilled Worker, Canadian Experience* class.

Resources

- immigration-nation.ca, Moving to Canada as an American: CUSMA (Formerly NAFTA) Work Permits & LMIA Exemptions
- CUSMA hints, https://www.calverimmigrationservices.com/post/navigating-work-permits-for-professionals-under-cusma-your-guide-to-working-in-canada
- Compass (charitable organization) on CUSMA, https://www.compassimmigration.ca/blog/how-to-immigrate-to-canada-from-the-us-cusma
- List of professions, https://www.canadavisa.com/nafta-professionals.html

- canadavisa.com discussion group, https://www.canadavisa.com/canada-immigration-discussion-board/

7.3 LMIAs

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/work-canada/hire-temporary-foreign.html

They are pronounced “lamia”, but they’re not the ancient Greek snake-woman[i] who devours young men.

Instead a Labor Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) looks to see if there is a need for a foreign worker for a particular job. It’s a hurdle, not a snake. The idea is to see if there are no qualified Canadian citizens or permanent residents who will do it.
The assessment is requested by the employer via Service Canada. The employer will be required to post the job on the Government of Canada Job Bank, https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/home and advertised nationally in at least two ways, for 30 days.

https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/foreign-workers/median-wage/high/requirements.html

There are a number of categories where a LMIA is not required.

These are typically for jobs that Canada already knows it wants to be filled. An example is the *Francophone Mobility* work permit, which doesn’t require an LMIA you intend to live and work outside Quebec.

These are announced by the Prime Minister irregularly, when there is a clear need. In February, 2026, the PM announced one for persons who want to become a member of the Canadian Forces.

The current non-lamia set includes at least

- health care and social services workers, such as nurse practitioners, dentists, pharmacists, psychologists and chiropractors,
- trades, such as carpenters, plumbers and machinists,
- foreign-trained doctors with Canadian work experience, added in December 2025,
- the francophone mobility category, and
- the new Canadian Forces category, from February 2026.

Knowing which of these program to apply to usually requires expert advice.

Resources

- Immigrating to Canada: Does Canada Need More of My Profession? 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gya6dqDCT0

7.4 Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP)

https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/foreign-workers.html

This is the ordinary foreign worker program, usually known for the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP), that Canada offers to people from Mexico and the Caribbean.

However, it's far wider than that. It includes both low-wage and high-wage jobs. The programs are

- the Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP) and
- the Canadian Experience Class (CEC), both of which are non-seasonal, and
- the Federal Skilled Trades Program (FSTP), which can be seasonal work.

All provide employer-specific work permits based on a job offer. Employers normally require an LMIA, unless there is a high need. For example, foreign physicians coming to work in Quebec don't need a LMIA. There is a list of these jobs here.

There is even an option for an employer hire a skilled worker in support of an application for permanent residency, if they expect to need the person forever. Yes, that's contradictory.

7.5 Open Work Permit

There are also two other forms of work permit. The first we've already seen in Chapter 2, the Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP).

The other is an open work permit, that allows the person to work for any Canadian employer. These are only available for certain groups, such as spouses of skilled workers, international students, or those in the process of transitioning to permanent residency, but they avoid the need for an employer to work through a LMIA.

Caution! There is a false claim that Canada was considering shutting down open work permits. Not so: https://toronto.citynews.ca/2026/02/02/ircc-refutes-reports-that-canadas-open-work-permit-programs-are-ending-this-2026/

7.6 Work Transfers to Canada

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/work-canada/special-instructions/business-people.html under I*ntra-company transferees*

Canada has some special cases in NAFTA that line up with the International Mobility Program (IMP). One includes employees moving within the same company to a Canadian office, or starting a Canadian office. This isn't as easy as being a digital nomad, but allows you to live and work for your employer in Canada without being remote, and for one to three year periods, renewable for up to five years.

I worked in Minneapolis under the US version of this, which was then called a "white card".

There is no requirement for a Lamia, and time spent counts toward “Canadian experience” in an application for permanent residence.

Resources

- https://www.cicnews.com/2026/01/these-us-workers-have-an-advantage-in-moving-to-canada-0166211.html
- https://immigration.ca/intra-company-transferees/
- https://www.canadavisa.com/intra-company-transfer-program.html
- https://motivus.law/canadian-immigration/intra-company-transfers
- https://www.ackahlaw.com/services/canada-work-visas/intra-company-job-transfers

7.7 Canada’s Healthcare Infusions

https://engageq.notion.site/infusionhosts

This initiative, mentioned in Chapter 1, is a grass-roots campaign to get more healthcare workers to move here.

We have a shortage of doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers, so Tod and Jocelyn Maffin started a volunteer migration-support group. They started in Nanaimo, BC and it has spread across all of Canada.

They have a map of the groups across Canada at that site, each of which has expertise in the worker needs of the area.

Resources

Notably, there is a collection of YouTube talks by Tod Maffin:

- Find safety in Canada, 2026, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6HOJyoHrpo
- U.S. Nurses Begin Arriving in Nanaimo, 2026, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTtbHcmD0WM
- The Nanaimo Infusion – We're Doing It Again! 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J8no3Bscpno
- Moving to Canada as a Doctor or Healthcare Worker, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryTdNBC9mn8
- U.S. Healthcare Workers: Want to Work in Canada? Watch This First! 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ACEPjGYJfg

The Nova Scotia chapter has been in the news lately,

- A no-brainer: Why some U.S. health-care workers are moving to Nova Scotia”, at https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/american-healthcare-workers-moving-nova-scotia-9.7025866
- https://novascotiahealthcareinfusion.notion.site/Nova-Scotia-Healthcare-Infusion-297e74c53bba81a4b908cd47106894a6

Nurses can now license more easily

- https://moving2canada.com/features/how-to-move-to-canada-as-a-nurse-may-20-2026/

Doctors

It's harder to move to Canada as a doctor, but we've recently improved this. People certified by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), the American Board of Family Medicine (ABFM), or the American Osteopathic Association (AOA), probably don't need to take the qualifying exam.

Once you're here, provinces offering full licenses are British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. In other words, everywhere except Ontario, Quebec, and the territories. If you don't have those qualifications, you can work as a kind of an apprentice for 12 weeks and have your supervisor approve you.

The provinces and territories, starting with the Yukon, are also making it easier to start practicing, without having to find someone to supervise your apprenticeship

https://moving2canada.com/features/how-to-work-in-canada-as-a-doctor/

https://www.cicnews.com/2026/07/yukon-simplifies-path-to-practice-for-internationally-trained-family-doctors-0778588.html?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter-20260730

7.8 For All of These

Immigration *publishes* the criteria that immigration officers use, to avoid blind-siding applicants. Of course, it's written in bureaucratese, or perhaps parseltongue.

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/operational-bulletins-manuals/temporary-residents/foreign-workers/international-free-trade-agreements/general-agreement-trade-services.html

To determine eligibility, officers should consider the following factors:

- *the intentions of the applicant*
    - *What is the applicant doing in Canada?*
    - *How long has the applicant been here?*
    - *How long is the request for?*
- *the reason given by the applicant for applying for the extension*
    - *Are the plans well thought out or merely frivolous?*
    - *Has the applicant previously received an extension?*
- *the applicant's situation in their home country*
    - *What family, employment or other responsibilities and obligations has the person left behind?*

        - *How have these responsibilities been discharged?*
        - *Is a prolonged stay in Canada reasonable and feasible?*
    - *the initial intent of the application*
        - *What was the original purpose of the business visit to Canada?*
        - *Has the original purpose of the business visit been fulfilled?*
        - *If the original purpose of the business visit has not been fulfilled, was sufficient time originally granted to fulfill the purpose?*
    - *the necessary license or documentation to practice the applicant's occupation in Canada in instances where an occupation is regulated at a provincial or territorial level. For example, in most provinces and territories, electrician and plumber are regulated occupations and require documentation to be practiced.*

Resources

- A light-hearted Todd Maffin video on moving to Canada as a skilled worker, "11 Things Americans Must Know Before Moving to Canada", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnux5kWrvPs
- Information about background checks for jobs, https://moving2canada.com/features/background-checks-for-jobs-in-canada-what-to-expect/?utm_source=news.moving2canada.com&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_campaign=resources-for-newcomers-march-1-2026
- About reference checks, https://moving2canada.com/features/reference-checks-in-canada-prepare-your-referees/
- In the skilled trades. https://moving2canada.com/features/newcomers-guide-working-skilled-trades-in-canada
- Processing times: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/check-processing-times.html

7.9 Green Card Holders in the US

Canada *may* be getting ready to relaunch its fast-track work permit for U.S. H-1B visa holders. Last year's took two days for 10,000 applicants to apply for three-year open work permits. The popularity may have something to do with the US $100,000 fee for new H-1B visas.

- https://moving2canada.com/features/canada-h1b-work-permit-how-to-prepare/

This is a live document. These links will change. Always refer to the government pages for current rules. And please file an issue at https://codeberg.org/tokugawa-behr/Fleeing-to-Canada/issues so I'll know what needs updating.

In Short

It’s perfectly possible to get a job in Canada and get a work permit, if the employer agrees. That doesn’t make it particularly easy, but some support groups *strongly* want you to succeed.

i Deevid.ai, Sketch of a Lamia”, AI-generated image, 2026.

Chapter 8. Express Entry

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8.7 Quebec Skilled Worker Program (QSWP)..... 6

There isn't really a "slow entry" any more. Express entry is the normal way to apply to become a permanent resident (PR).

Express entry is a replacement for an older, slower, process. In order to increase immigration, it was introduced in 2015, and created a streamlined system based on points for skills, family considerations and job offers.

When everything is working well, express entry takes about six months and results in you being granted permanent residence. It's rarely that quick, but the old version took years. In most cases, you will need one of the immigration consultants I mentioned in section 1.9 or a lawyer from 1.10.

8.1 Introduction

Canada has both a low birth rate and an aging population, so it's particularly open to skilled workers joining the workforce (and tax rolls). We're therefor looking for people with language skills, work experience, education, and drive.

Demographics drives express entry, but it has been derailed by happenstance, or by a US president doing something surpassingly stupid. Fortunately, demographics will win out in the end: the Canadian population dropped for the first time in 2025, causing muted consternation

8.2 Many Paths, one Destination

There are numerous paths making up part of express entry, notably

- Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP)
- Canadian Experience Class (CEC)
- Federal Skilled Trades Program (FSTP)

In parallel to Express Entry itself, there are also mechanisms for immigration to specific provinces. These are qualifying mechanisms for express entry, with different options.

- Provincial Nominee Programs (PNP) and

- Quebec Skilled Worker Program (QSWP) if you wish to reside in Quebec.

Most use a system called the Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS). It is a points-based system that we use to assess and score your profile and rank it in the express entry pool. It's used to assess your:

- skills
- education
- language ability
- work experience

and any other factors.

There is a calculator for your "CRS score" at https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/express-entry/check-score.html

This is a table of some of the factors, excerpted from https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/express-entry/check-score/crs-criteria.html

Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS) criteria

Factor name	Description	Points with a spouse	Points without
Age	Ages 20 to 29 have the highest scores	100	110
Education			
	Secondary diploma (high school graduation)	28	30
	One-year degree, diploma or certificate from a university, college, trade or technical school, or other institute	84	90
	Two-year program at a university, college, trade or technical school, or other institute	91	98
	Bachelor's degree OR a three or more year program at a university, college, trade or technical school, or other institute	112	120
	Master's degree, or professional degree needed to practice in a licensed profession, eg medicine,	126	135
	Doctoral level university degree (Ph.D.)	140	150
Languages proficiency			
	For each of reading, writing, speaking and listening	32	34
Canadian work experience			
	None or less than a year	0	0
	1 year	35	40
	2 years	46	53
	3 years	56	64
	4 years	63	72
	5 years or more	70	80
Skill Transferabi			

lity factors

With good/strong official languages proficiency and a post-secondary degree	50	50
With Canadian work experience and a post-secondary degree	50	50
With good/strong official languages proficiency and foreign work experience	50	50
With Canadian work experience and foreign work experience	50	50
Certificate of qualification		
With good/strong official languages proficiency and a certificate of qualification	50	50
Additional points		
Brother or sister living in Canada (18 years or older, citizen or permanent resident)	15	15
French language skills	50	50
Post-secondary education in Canada	30	30
Provincial or territorial nomination	600	600

Each program is limited to a certain number of applicants who are above a particular score, and individuals to be invited are drawn randomly from the applicants who qualify. Draws are every 2-3 weeks. And yes, you get fewer points if you're married. Whoopie.

Training, Education, Experience, and Responsibilities (TEER)

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/find-national-occupation-code.html

The occupations you can apply for include:

General	Medical/allied professionals	Scientists
accountant	dentist	agriculturist (or agronomist)
architect	dietitian	animal breeder
computer systems analyst	medical laboratory technologist	animal scientist
disaster relief insurance claims adjuster	nutritionist	apiculturist
economist	occupational therapist	astronomer
engineer	pharmacist	biochemist
forester	physician (teaching or research only)	biologist (or plant pathologist)
graphic designer	physiotherapist/physical therapist	chemist
hotel manager	psychologist	dairy scientist
industrial designer	recreational therapist	entomologist
interior designer	registered nurse	epidemiologist
land surveyor	veterinarian	geneticist
landscape architect		geologist
lawyer (or notary in the province of Quebec)		geochemist
librarian		geophysicist
management consultant		horticulturist
mathematician (or statistician and actuary)		meteorologist

General	Medical/allied professionals	Scientists
range manager or range conservationist		pharmacologist
research assistant (working in a post-secondary institution)		physicist (or oceanographer)
scientific technician or technologist		plant breeder
social worker		poultry scientist
sylviculturist (or forestry specialist)		soil scientist
technical publications writer		zoologist
urban planner (or geographer)		
vocational counsellor		

These break down into yet another code, a 4-digit “NOC code”, for individual jobs titles.

Resources

- How to Choose the Right NOC Code for Express Entry, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qF57PySWlj4 (from moving2canada.com)

8.3 Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP)

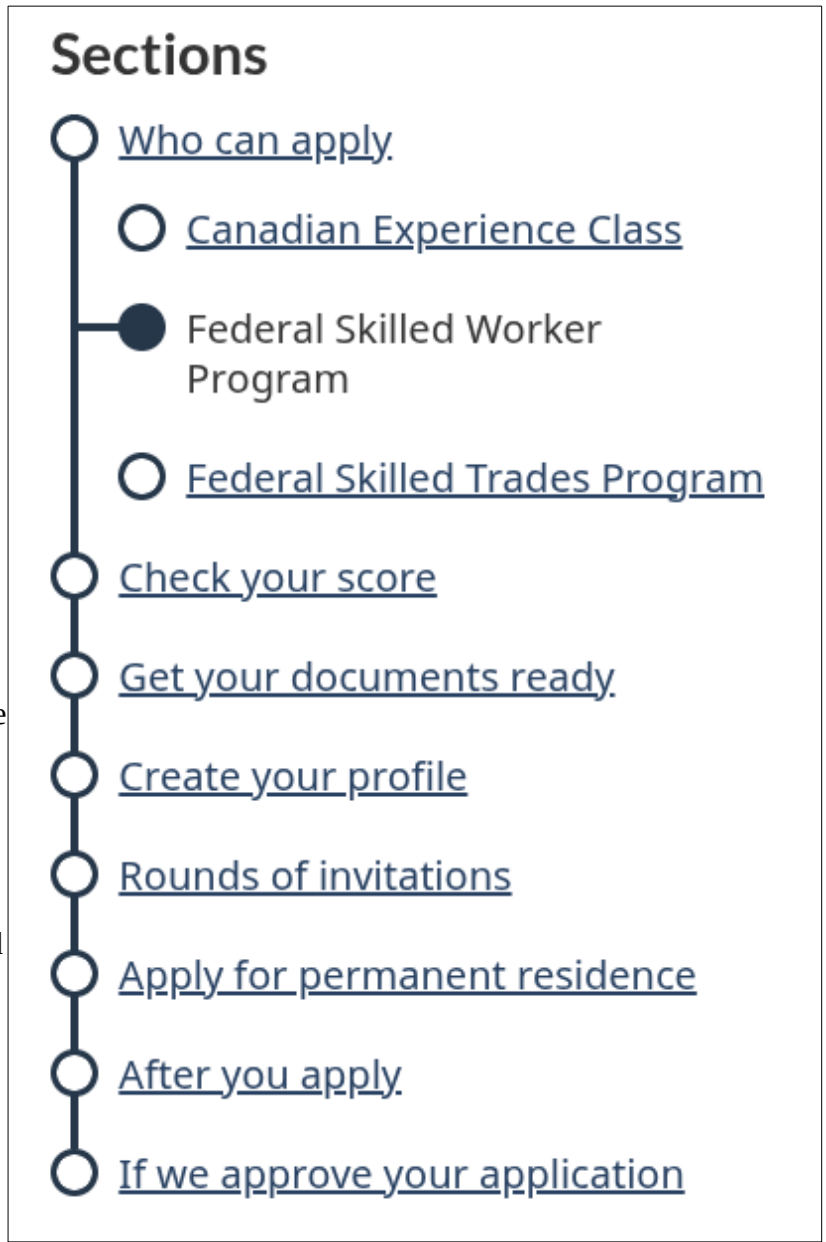
https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/express-entry/who-can-apply/federal-skilled-workers.html

This as a program to get people who have done an apprenticeship or gone through college or university.

It aims at getting people with working experience in particular categories to apply. The categories are those mentioned in the TEER table above.

Your experience needs to be appropriate to the area you’re applying to, although it can be in a former job.

It formerly included points for having a job offer. That was removed, but immigration hopes to restore it, and add points for having required licenses, hopefully in 2026.



The points used in this program are different from the pools above but the minimum is published: you need 67 points in this particular scheme on the web page above.

In this and all the programs below, one of the common roadblocks is employers' lack of resources to verify foreign educational credentials and work experience, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15562948.2022.2133201

For college and universities, get a transcript, or perhaps have a certified transcript sent directly to the prospective employer. For proof of employment, your offer letter, pay stubs W-2 or 1099 tax forms should suffice. If you're not sure about that, you can ask the employer for an official lettersto verify your employment.

In any case, collect recommendations on LinkedIn that align with the jobs that you want to emphasize. This is a particularly easy way for an employer to gain confidence about you.

8.4 Canadian Experience Class (CEC)

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/express-entry/who-can-apply/canadian-experience-class.html

This is the program for anyone who has experience working in Canada.

If you have a year's Canadian work experience in the last three years, you qualify. You don't have to been an apprentice, attended college, or graduated university. You do have to fall into one of the skilled jobs mentioned above.

If you are a physician, there is a new category for you, starting in 2026. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/medical-doctors.html

If you did go to a Canadian high school, college or university, you get points for that. Similarly, if you complete a college or university program elsewhere, that also pays some points.

Resources

- Immigration pages on the medical category, https://iccimmigration.ca/new-express-entry-category-for-physicians-with-canadian-work-experience-pr-pathway-explained-2026-update/
- https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/medical-doctors.html

8.5 Federal Skilled Trades Program (FSTP)

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/express-entry/who-can-apply/federal-skilled-trades.html

If you're a member of one of the skilled trades, there is a program for that, much like the "skilled worker" program. Typically it means you apprenticed in

- construction
- transportation
- manufacturing or other industrial work, or
- natural resources and agriculture.

You need two years experience in your trade in the five years before you apply.

In this program you will need either

- a certificate from a Canadian province saying that your qualifications are valid in Canada, or
- a job offer to work in your trade.

Like the skilled trades program, you get extra points for attending college or university, and a Canadian high school.

8.6 Provincial Nominee Programs (PNP)

A province can also nominate you for one of the three express entry processes. I'll look at the Ontario program as an example, but all the provinces and the northwest territories have programs, each with a certain quota for cantidates.

https://settlement.org/ontario/immigration-citizenship/immigrating-to-ontario/immigration-categories/what-is-opportunities-ontario-provincial-nominee-program-pnp

This is specifically for people with job offers, replacing the previous scheme where offers were part of the qualifying points scheme for regular express entry.

You can qualify if you fall into one of these three streams

- Foreign Worker stream, if you a skilled foreign worker with a job offer in Ontario, or if you're a physician.
- International Student stream, for recent graduates with a job offer, and, most importantly,
- In-Demand Skills stream

The latter is for people in a list of occupations described in in-demand skills. These include everything from home care workers to railroad track maintenance workers.

These streams do not require apprenticeship or a degree.

8.7 Quebec Skilled Worker Program (QSWP)

https://www.quebec.ca/en/immigration/permanent/choose-quebec

Quebec has a similar program, “Choosing to immigrate to Québec”. It is oriented toward skilled workers, who have both conversational french and want to live in Quebec

There is a different program, *Express Entry for French-speaking skilled workers* who wish to work *elsewhere* in Canada, that is managed as part of express entry.

- https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/campaigns/francophone-immigration-outside-quebec.html
- https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/rural-franco-pilots/franco-immigration.html

8.8 Other Resources

- A video suggesting that if your work permit is running out, apply for Permanent Residency https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQCzY7MvXTg
- Ontario guide on immigrating, https://settlement.org/ (previously mentioned)
- canadavisa.com has a calculator for how many express point you have, https://www.canadavisa.com/canadian-immigration-visas.html
- As a Nurse, https://moving2canada.com/features/how-to-move-to-canada-as-a-nurse-may-20-2026/
- Rural Community Immigration Pilot (RCIP) and the Francophone Community Immigration Pilot (FCIP) are new permanent-resident programs for persons wishing to live in rural ares and for francophones wishing to live outside of Quebec. https://moving2canada.com/features/rcip-fcip-work-permit-pdi-update
- https://allhod.com/canada-immigration/express-entry/
- https://www.bordersolutionslaw.com/canadian-immigration/express-entry/
- Processing times: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/check-processing-times.html

8.9 Changes for 2026

i. A new category was added, for “**Physicians with Canadian Work Experience**” https://moving2canada.com/news-and-features/news/immigration/new-express-entry-stream-plus-5000-pnp-spots-for-international-doctors/

If you’ve done this job under NAFTA, you’re eligible for residencey.

ii. For **US H1-B visa holders**, an escape hatch. The US is now charging a $100,000 supplemental fee for applying for an H1-B visa, payable by the employer. Anyone needing in a new visa or extending an

old one is charged this prohibitive fee. Canada is proposing to recreate a program from last year to let those people come to Canada instead. As of April, 2026, we are awaiting a final announcement.

- https://moving2canada.com/features/canada-h1b-work-permit-how-to-prepare/
- https://moving2canada.com/features/h1b-rejection-isnt-the-end-of-the-road-canada-might-be-viable-alternative/

iii. Also being emphasized are

- **pilots, aircraft mechanics or inspectors**, and
- candidates for the **Canadian Forces** in roles such as doctors, nurses and pilots.

iv. There is a proposal to combine Federal Skilled Worker (FSW), Canadian Experience Class (CEC), and Federal Skilled Trades (FSTP), into a single “high-skilled immigration” program. I read that as getting more skilled immigrants, by making it easier to avoid getting stuck in the process. Public consultations are planned for spring, 2026.

v. Existing in-Canada workers can be fast-tracked for permanent resident.

If you’ve been here on a work visa for two years in a smaller community, you can be fast-tracked automatically, subject to a list of criteria:

- https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2026/04/understanding-the-one-time-in-canada-workers-initiative.html
- https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2026/04/understanding-the-one-time-in-canada-workers-initiative.html

This is a live document. These links will change. Always refer to the government pages for current rules. And please file an issue at https://codeberg.org/tokugawa-behr/Fleeing-to-Canada/issues if anything is wrong so I’ll know to update it.

In Short

This is the most normal, but one of the busisest ways to become a permanent resident, and eventually a citizen. And you can get started on it as soon as you arrive in Canada.

Chapter 9. As a True Refugee

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This is a “last chance” approach, if nothing else makes sense. It depends on Canada recognizing that you are not safe in Gilead, even though that’s where you grew up or previously fled to.

The *very* thing this book is most about turns out to be the hardest way to move to Canada. That’s why I described all the easier ones first.

Conversely, it is the best-described, because it’s *important*.

9.1 Introduction

The first step is showing you ***are*** a refugee

If you’re applying a refugee, part of the prove-you’re-a-refugee process depends on *how* you came here:

- Being sponsored as for “refugee resettlement”.
- Applying as a refugee at the border.
- Coming as a visitor or student and applying afterwards.
- Crossing the border illegally and later applying.

Crossing Illegally

The fourth approach *used* to be very common. Because of the so-called “Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA)”, refugees in the US used to come to Roxham Road in Quebec and cross. The RCMP had a detachment there, would warn them, then take them into custody and arrange for a refugee hearing. The Roxham crossing is shut down now, in part due to the cost to Quebec, and in part due to pointed requests from the US that Canada change the agreement.

Other refugees have try to sneak in across the great plains in the winter. That’s life-threatening, and has killed whole families.

Fortunately, US citizens are *not* blocked by the SCTA, so that particular hurdle doesn't apply to them. If you're not a citizen, though, you need to look out for this. See Section 9.4, below, for more on the STCA.

Applying When in Canada

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/application-forms-guides/guide-0174-inland-refugee-claims-portal.html

The third of the four approaches is called an "inland refugee claim". It's currently available to anyone who has been in Canada for *more than* 14 days. That also includes people who had crossed illegally. This is a different process than applying at the border subject to the SCTA, where the most recent amendments say you must apply *before* 14 days pass.

The process starts with, of course, a form. This is called an IRB Basis of Claim (BOC) form

- https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/forms/Documents/RpdSpr0201_e.pdf
- https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/forms/Pages/RpdSpr0201.aspx

Because of the probability of confusion and erroneous rulings, you *should* seek legal representation, which is yet another form to fill out, https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/application-forms-guides/imm5476.html

Finally you create an account on the IRCC Portal and complete your application on-line, from within Canada.. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/application-forms-guides/imm5476.html This *cannot* be done from the US

Bill C-12 added a new requirement that you must apply within one year of your first (ever!) entry to Canada. That applies to US citizens and non-citizens alike. See section 9.5, below.

Applying at the Border

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/asylum/border.html

The second approach is like applying from within Canada, with a few organizational differences.

The first step is prove your identity and give biometrics scans or fingerprints if you're 14 years of age and up.

A border security office will pre-screen you. They will will ask you about your background, why you came to Canada, and what dangers you face in your home country.

References:

- Unusually, there is no official guide on what questions will be asked. https://myrefugeeclaim.ca/en/guide/start-your-refugee-claim/eligibility-interview/ is a good reference, collected from other government publications and previous immigrants.

It’s probably best if you skip ahead and work through the IRB Basis of Claim form first, so you will have thought about many of the questions. Resources for *that* are below, in section 9.2, under Resources for Hearings.

If you pass the screening, you will be referred to the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) to formally fill out the BOC form. You have a maximum of two weeks to do this. In addition, you will usually need to fill out a medical report form, https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/medical-police/medical-exams/requirements-temporary-residents.html which in turn may require a medical examination.

Being Sponsored as a Refugee

https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/sponsor-refugee/private-sponsorship-program.html

The first of the four possibilities is being sponsored. This the one for refugees instead of for family members.

If you’re already a UN “convention refugee” in the US, you can be sponsored to come to Canada by:

- An established organization or church that wants to help refugees resettle in Canada, called a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH)
- Groups of 5, ordinary citizens, often neighbours or co-workers, who sponsor individual refugees or families.
- Community Sponsors, small-scale organizations, associations or corporations that sponsor refugees to come to Canada.

Refugee sponsoring gets turned off and on. For right now, it was off in 2025 and restarted for 2026, with a target of 15,000 sponsored refugees a year.

Individual programs also can be temporarily turned off, too. Right now, groups of 5 and community organizations are paused, but pre-screened SAHs can keep sponsoring.

SAHs include religious organizations, cultural groups and humanitarian organizations. For example, the Anglican Diocese of Toronto, Humanity First and the World University Service of Canada Student Refugee Program, are all SAHs. There are more support groups mentioned in section 1.4, some of which are SAHs.

The full list of SAHs is https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/sponsor-refugee/private-sponsorship-program/agreement-holders/holders-list.html

9.2 Steps for all four

Who gets in as a refugee? Three broad groups of people:

Status Category	Eligibility Details
UN Refugee Convention Refugees	People with established refugee status from UNHCR.
Protected Persons	Those facing persecution in their home country such as

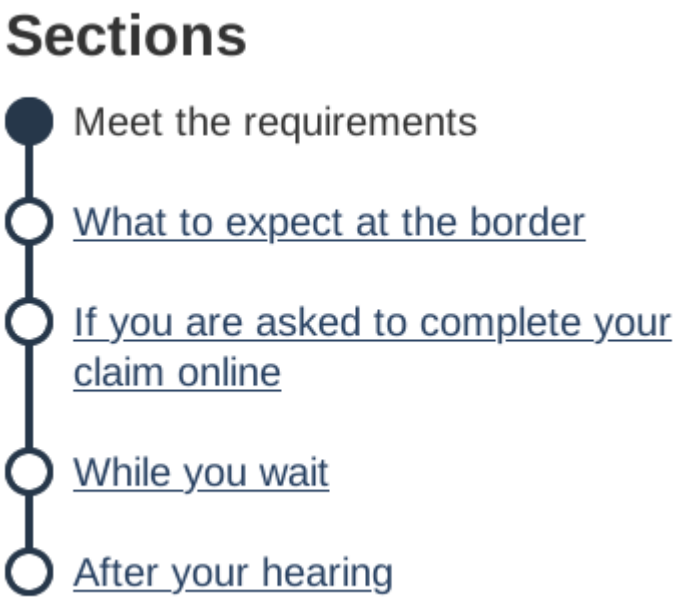
Status Category	Eligibility Details
	LGBTQ+ people from countries with laws criminalizing sexual orientation or gender identity.
Vulnerable Persons	People not yet formally recognized as refugees, such as LGBTQ+ people facing severe discrimination, or potential persecution.

The third category is probably the relevant one here. You may be in Gilead, but you are not yet a protected person.

To be vulnerable, a “person in need of protection”, you must be

- in danger of torture,
- at risk to your life, or
- at risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.

The best way to know if you are going to qualify is to go through the form-filling process, see what’s needed, and then arrange to get all the needed information.


Sections
Meet the requirements
What to expect at the border
If you are asked to complete your claim online
While you wait
After your hearing

The form and it’s guide are

https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/refugee-claims/Pages/ClaDemGuide.aspx

https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/forms/pages/rpdspr0201.aspx

Just like for NAFTA visas, Immigration publishes their interview guidelines, to avoid blind-siding applicants: *Guideline 9: Proceedings Before the IRB Involving Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics*, https://irb.gc.ca/en/legal-policy/policies/Pages/GuideDir09.aspx

They’re exhaustive, but genuinely hard to understand. A good immigration lawyer will help.

Resources for Hearings

- Queer Refugee Hearings Program Toolkit
  - This available as both a printable document (133 pages) and an interactive program. It contains the suite of question to expect, such as “27. When and how did you realize that your gender identity may be different than your assigned sex at birth?” The guide includes a list of support organization, by city.
  - https://capitalrainbow.ca/qrhp
- The519’s mock hearings, for practice. These are one-on-one rehearsals with a lawyer,

    - https://www.the519.org/programs/mock-hearing-program/
- Refugee Hearing Preparation Guide, for all refugees. Contains a section on hearings
    - https://myrefugeeclaim.ca/en/
    - online “group tours” of the refugee process, at https://myrefugeeclaim.ca/en/ready-tours/
- Law Foundation of Ontario
    - Refugee Orientation meetings https://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/refugee-orientations-online/
    - Safe Third country Agreement: refugee protection https://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/refugee-orientations-online/

Clinics

- Canada-U. S. Border Rights Clinic. Visit to learn more about making a refugee claim at the Canada-U. S. border and to book a free consultation for legal advice. Online/phone, https://canadaborderclinic.org/
- The 519, as mentioned above, https://www.the519.org
- Immigration and Refugee Legal Clinic (IRLC) — https://www.irlc.ca/

Information

- Project Haven at UofT - The Asylum lab is a research organization, and project Haven is part of it. Two of its reports are notable:
    - The guide, https://haven.utsc.utoronto.ca/index.php/a-guide-for-lgbtqi-asylum-seekers-crossing-the-canada-u-s-border/
    - The Haven resource map, https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1Ycmn2RnXbPcceYpjzie8sCQDumshNyA&ll=52.54292139355158%2C-87.64755717922108&z=4Map
- Processing times: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/check-processing-times.html

9.3 Transgender Immigration Cases in Canada

The biggest roadblocks to a successful refugee claim for an 2SLGBTQI+ person are “men of good will, lacking in judgment[i]”. Our immigration officers expect “students, wealthy-ish business people, skilled workers and refugees”, typically meaning refugees from distant countries. They didn’t even get timely warnings that the *US* was becoming more and more dangerous, and so rejected a trans person in 2025.

It was appealed, and became Jenkel v. Canada (Citizenship and Immigration), 2025 FC 1178 (CanLII) https://www.canlii.org/en/ca/fct/doc/2025/2025fc1178/2025fc1178.html?resultId=70232845a72247aaa1231bc9e63c5a29&searchId=2026-02-07T15:50:47:814/321506ed2ae94f9b891a8a3beb7ecba8

The judge sent the case back to immigration with instructions that they were to look at the current state in the US, and this *particular* refugee was admitted.

Alas, that wasn't normal. Canada has a rule that you should try moving to a safe state first, and there hasn't been a case yet about the federal government's actions against trans people across multiple states.

The lack of acceptance remains. *Toronto Life* quotes Adrienne Smith as saying *"Trans people are terrified": This LGBTQ immigration lawyer has been inundated with inquiries from the US since Donald Trump's election* https://torontolife.com/city/trans-people-are-terrified-this-lgbtq-immigration-lawyer-has-been-inundated-with-inquiries-from-the-us-since-donald-trumps-election/

She defended Ms Jenkel, and since has posted some advice as *How to make an LGBTQ+ refugee claim in Canada* at https://www.smithimmigrationgroup.com/tips-for-lgbtq-refugees. It is paralleled by a 2020 YouTube talk (for lawyers!) on the subject, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-ElAvXyWhc

The Canadian Bar Association has also asked for easier sanctuary. C*anada's Immigration Response for Trans Individuals*, 2025, calls for abandoning the STCA. https://cba.org/our-impact/submissions/canada-s-immigration-response-for-trans-individuals/#:~:text=While%20the%20Safe%20Third%20Country,(%E2%80%9CH&C%E2%80%9D)%20applications

"Canada's refugee system has historically denied claims from Americans due to the presumption of state protection and internal flight alternatives. This presumption is no longer valid given the systemic targeting of trans people across the United States, from the federal government and through the introduction of anti-trans legislation in nearly every state."

Many gender-based refugee claims are initially unsuccessful, but many are successful at the appeal stage, "Immigrating to Canada as LGBTQ2S", https://queerjustice.ca/en/topics/immigration/

In 2025, the government appears to have listened to some degree and published LGBTQ-related information, https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/about-refugee-system/2slgbtqi-plus.html

In 2026, applications for processing "lost Canadians" (Chapter 6) were amended for trans and other people, to allow them to ask for urgent handling on the basis of "potential harm or hardship" on account of "sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or membership in particular groups". This appears to be the first explicit recognition of the dangers to trans people in the US.

- Processing times: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/check-processing-times.html

9.4 A Sidebar on Bill C-2 and C-12, the “Strong Borders” Acts

C-2 was the original, and as you might guess from the title, part of the US efforts to get Canada to close our border to “prevent fentanyl import”. It was widely criticized as being too harsh to refugees arriving the US, and allowing too much information to be provided to the US, and stalled in parliament

C-12 was all the things from C-2 that were thought to be non-controversial. Instead, C-12 was criticized for not being harsh *enough*. It passed in March, 2026. Notably, it changed the time limits.

- Anyone who is seeking asylum, and has been in the country for more than a year will be rejected. The year would start the first time you come to Canada, whether on a work permit or visitor’s visa. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) noted that this is in contravention to the 1951 Refugee Convention, which Canada signed.
- All asylum seekers entering Canada “irregularly” must apply within the first 14 days.

And yes, that is diametrically opposite to the law before March 2026, which said you can’t apply after “irregular” entry until *after* you have been here 14 days. Think of this change as a booby-trap.

https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-ircc-orders-asylum-claimants-who-crossed-us-border-irregularly-to/

https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-scores-of-asylum-claimants-warned-they-may-face-deportation-after/

Immigration sent letters to people who are affected by the retroactive law change, failed to say there were appeal procedures, and stated that the rules established by C-12 in 2026 are retroactive. They then corrected themselves, and removed that requirement from unaccompanied minors under 18.

Legal challenges are believed to be underway, as C-12 breaks Canada’s international agreements in refuge cases. In addition, international law and the Charter of Rights provides protections against retroactive criminal laws.

If changing the rules was a booby-trap, then this is a land-mine. *Expect spirited debate.*

9.5 A Sidebar on the Safe Third Country Agreement (SCTA)

The SCTA is a bilateral deal between Canada and the US, to keep people from coming to Canada and continuing from here to the US. It is not directly relevant to US-born citizens, but it is to everyone else.

It is

- A substantial blocker for refugees transiting Canada for the US.
- Initially, a partial blocker to people transiting the US on their way to Canada.
- Not enough of a blocker to people transiting Canada on their way to the US, for the US government. They wanted more restriction.

The rules used to apply at customs points, but didn't block people crossing elsewhere. For example, Roxham Road. At the instance of the US, it was amended to close "irregular" crossing points. Think of this as as adding US "exit controls", like the USSR once had.

The changes in C-12 also allow you to be expelled if you fail to apply for refuge in the first 14 days after you arrive "irregularly". The law up to March 2026 required you to hide out for 14 days instead: see Step 1 in https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/asylum/border/eligibility.html (which is only partially updated as of 30 March 2026)

O**n March 27, 2026,** Immigration started sending letters to refugee claimants, saying they must leave the country: see section 9.4, above. Further updates re expected.

Before Mr Trump's second term began, the courts did not immediately strike down the safe third country agreement, but instead left questions to the federal court to resolve. Since then, the courts have been told to take notice of new dangers from gender-based discrimination, against refugees arriving from the US.

Resources

- Exit Wounds, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQ_rE5MBOlg

9.6 Changes Proposed in 2026

In 2019, a program was added for the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada to read the BOC form, and immediately approve people from known dangerous nations. At the same time, immigration officers at the borders were taught to not turn away applicants on mere *suspicion*.

There is now political push-back from the C. D. Howe Institute (Conservative), who claim that the "File Review" system lets too many people in. The NDP and Bloc Quebecois have the opposite concern, that the backlogs that file review adresses means we are not meeting our humanitarian obligations.

None of those parties is in government. "A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" (Macbeth).

This is a live document. These links will change. Always refer to the government pages for current rules. And please file an issue at https://codeberg.org/tokugawa-behr/Fleeing-to-Canada/issues so I'll know what needs updating.

In Short

This is not an easy process, but it can be worthwhile. Syn Amanuel fled Eritrea and writes "as a refugee, I hated Canada until one specific night. Now I see this as a stage in a journey. I'm sharing my

story to give hope, to tell those who just arrived that they won't always feel like a refugee". https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/syn-amanuel-first-person-refugee-1.6892865

Other Resources

Chapter 10 contains more resources, for everyone *after* they arrive in Canada. For example, it includes help on resettlement, employment and healthcare

i Adams, H. (1918). The education of Henry Adams. Houghton Mifflin.

Chapter 10. After You Get Here

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Once you're in Canada, you have all the usual problem that you'd see moving somewhere else in your home country, exacerbated by our doing everything *differently*.

The first place to look is in the "please move to Canada guides". For example, the federal one at https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/migration/ircc/english/pdf/pub/welcome.pdf and the Ontario one at https://settlement.org/firstdays/ Both dig into how to live here.

You will need a place to live, a bank account, your US prescriptions and a doctor. If you have children, you'll need to transfer them to a Canadian school.

Then you'll need a job, if you haven't pre-arranged one.

10.1 Somewhere to Live

Toronto is a good example of a high-priced city. When we were last looking for an apartment there, my wife came up with an elegant trick. She drove around the neighbourhoods she was interested in, looking for apartments that *weren't* advertised on the 'net.

She found three low-rise buildings that had met the test of time and, more importantly, were amortized. The owners were making good money by not overpricing them, which kept them filled. Newer, taller buildings usually have to set high prices to pay off their construction debt. That keeps them from attracting residents, so they raise their rents some more to cover the large numbers of vacancies.

For example, in 2025 a one-bedroom apartment at any of three we looked it was $2,100 a month in Canadian dollars, or $1,512 in US dollars. In a new building or especially downtown, it would be more like $2,700. That's $600 or 28% more for the same value. Unimpressive.

If you earn a middling wage, $2,100 will be around 1/3 of your income, which is normal. If you are working minimum wage, though, it would take half your income.

We found one near a main highway and within easy walking distance to the subway. We found two more walking distance from Yonge and Eglington, which is the centre of midtown and a main subway stop. All three qualify as being part of a “15 minute city”, with nearby stores, schools and theatres.

If you look on-line, you’ll find all the high-priced places. Then, explore the neighbourhoods you like and look for the ones that aren’t on the net. You should aim for ones that cost about 70% of the high-price ones. If you get below about C$1,500, though, you’re looking at a basement apartment in a triplex.

Resources, on settling in general

- Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA) - a toolkit on settlement and integration resources across Canada, such as free pre-arrival services (by the Government of Canada), an Alberta refugee claimant resources handbook, etc.

  https://aaisa.ca/

- BC Safe Haven Network – limited to BC - resources on the refugee claims process, how to sponsor refugees, the BC Refugee Hub, etc.

  https://issbc.org/our-programs-service/bc-safe-haven/

- The Canadian Council for Refugees has a list of organizations that provide refugee resources and services in Canada, plus recent immigration policy updates and news.

  https://www.ccrweb.ca/en

- CanRefugee has a resource map of settlement agencies, refugee houses, women’s shelters, and welcome churches across Canada

  https://www.canrefugee.ca/

  Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA) provides a toolkit on settlement and integration resources across Canada, such as free pre-arrival services (by the Government of Canada), an Alberta refugee claimant resources handbook, etc.

  https://aaisa.ca/

  BC Safe Haven Network is limited to BC, providing resources on the refugee claims process, how to sponsor refugees, the BC Refugee Hub, etc.

  https://issbc.org/our-programs-service/bc-safe-haven/

- Aide aux Trans has a resource directory for transgender individuals across Québec, including legal aid, housing and shelters, and medical care

  https://aideauxtrans.com/en

- Pflag U.S. and Pflag Canada connects 2SLGBTQI+ people to support resources, such as peer-to-peer support, education, resources, and events.

  https://pflagcanada.ca/

- Sparrow, commercial listings of rooms for rent

  https://sparrowshare.com/housemates/

- Rentals.ca, maps of apartments, houses, and condos for rent

  https://rentals.ca/

  - We used this to find likely areas and list prices

10.2 A Bank Accountant

Most of the five big banks have programs to attract newcomers For example, Scotiabank has one called the “StartRight” program.

- https://startright.scotiabank.com/ca/en/newcomers-to-canada-offer.html

You’ll need id, your US bank information, and a proof of address such as a utilities bill. If you have proof of residency, so much the better. If you’re a digital native or a longish-stay snowbird, bring your visa.

Resources

- https://wise.com/us/blog/opening-a-bank-account-in-canada

10.3 Travel Medical Insurance

You will need medical insurance, just like a visitor, until you can qualify for OHIP or anther provincial health plan.

Most travel insurance is available through your credit-card issuer. For example:

Card Issuer	URL	Key Features/Comments
American Express	https://www.americanexpress.com/en-ca/insurance/travel/	Offers travel insurance as part of various card benefits.
Chase	https://www.chase.com/personal/credit-cards/education/basics/what-is-travel-insurance-and-how-does-it-work	(Visa) Provides travel insurance benefits on several credit cards, including trip cancellation and medical coverage.
Citi	https://www.citi.com/	(MasterCard) Certain cards include travel insurance benefits.
Capital One	https://www.citi.com/https://www.capitalone.com/learn-grow/more-than-money/international-travel-insurance/	(MasterCard) Some travel cards offer travel insurance for emergencies and cancellations.
BMO Financial Group	https://www.bmo.com/main/personal/credit-cards/credit-card-travel-insurance/	(Visa) Offers travel insurance benefits with their credit cards for

Card Issuer	URL	Key Features/Comments
		travelers.

There are also sites which compare the prices of different plans.

- best quote, https://bestquotetravelinsurance.ca/

10.4 Your Prescriptions

You'll need to convert your prescriptions to Canadian. Like moving somewhere else in the US, this means you'll need a copy of your prescriptions from your doctor, and often a medical history.

You won't have a doctor yet, so reach out to an online service. In Ontario, this is *Health811.com*, the new name for Telehealth Ontario. Health811 can get you an on-line appointment with a doctor. The doctor can then "cosign" your prescription or provide you with a Canadian prescription.

They may need to look at your medical history to know about the medicines you take.

If you do not have a current prescription, Health811 can still help.

Resources:

- Prescriptions in Canada for Newcomers: Step-by-Step Guide
  https://moving2canada.com/living/healthcare/prescriptions-canada-newcomers/

10.5 A Doctor

Canada has free medicare, but we haven't been importing or training enough doctors, so you will probably need to work with someone like Rainbow Health Ontario to find a doctor. Health 811 will also help you find a doctor who is accepting new patients.

In the meantime, there are walk-in clinics or community health centres in most towns and cities in Canada.

Resources (Ontario)

- Rainbow Health Ontario has an up-to-date health resource library and health service provider map for Ontario's 2SLGBTQI+ communities
  - https://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/
  - https://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/2slgbtq-health/service-provider-directory/
- Health811 (formerly Telehealth Ontario) is a full-service health advice provider, available by phone or on-line
  - https://health811.ontario.ca/static/guest/home
  - phone: 1-866-797-0000
- Health Care Connect, to find a doctor or nurse practitioner

    - https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-family-doctor-or-nurse-practitioner
    - phone 1-800-445-1822.
- RateMDs, a review site. Its search allows you to find just doctors accepting new patients
    - https://www.ratemds.com/
    - https://www.ratemds.com/best-doctors/on/toronto/family-gp/?accepting_patients=true
- How to find a family doctor
    - https://moving2canada.com/living/healthcare/find-a-family-doctor-in-canada/

10.6 School for your Kids.

You'll need a collection of documents:

Document Type	Specific Requirements	Purpose
Passport	Valid for entire family	Proof of citizenship
Permanent Resident Card/Visa	For immigrant families	Legal entry authorization
Birth Certificates	Translated if not in English/French	Proof of age, identity
School Records	Previous academic transcripts	Grade placement
Immunization Records	Complete vaccination history	School registration
Custody Documents	If applicable	Guardianship verification

In some languages, you'll need certified translations of these.

Contact local school board as early as possible, to do things like scheduling health screenings.

School is mandatory from ages 6 to 18, and all children, regardless of their immigration status, have the right to attend public schools. If you do not have proof of permanent residency or a work/study permit, reach out to school and school board.

To reduce culture shock, there are government and school board support programs for newcomers.

Resource Type	Details	How to Access
Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS)	Free support program for newcomer students	Contact local school board or school directly
Government Newcomer Youth Services	Help during/after school, recreational activities	Over 500 service providers across Canada
School Board Support	Cultural liaisons, social workers, guidance counselors	Provided at most schools with newcomer students

Resources

- https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/settle-canada/youth-services.html

- https://www.canadavisa.com/canadian-education.html
- https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/study-permit/prepare/minor-children.html Study permits for Children

10.7 A Job

The best, of course, is to continue with your existing employer. After that, you're into the job-hunting process, which is an entirely different book.

Fortunately, there are people who will help.

Resources to help you find employment

- Centre for Immigrant and Community Services is a volunteer charitable group in Toronto. It has "Employment Programs for Newcomers and Internationally Trained Individuals"
  - https://www.cicscanada.com/en/
- COSTI Immigrant Services is supported by Employment Ontario, to provides numerous online services for workers who have immigrated
  - https://www.costi.org/
  - https://learn.costi.ca/moodle/

Job blockers

Regrettably, many of the skilled trades have non-tariff barriers. Reach out to the self-governing body as early as you can, or you may need to come as a student and take Canadian training in your industry. The medical profession is *famously* reluctant to let anyone reduce the demand for doctors.

Profession	Requalification Requirements	Bridging Programs?
Medical Doctors	Must pass the Medical Council of Canada Evaluating Examination and may need provincial licensing exams.	Yes, limited slots
Dentists	Require the National Dental Examining Board (NDEB) exams and provincial registration.	Some
Nurses	Must obtain license from the Canadian Nurses Association and, in some provinces, pass the NCLEX-RN exam.	*Greatly improved*
Pharmacists	Need to pass the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada (PEBC) exams and provincial registration.	Some provinces
Engineers	Must be licensed by a provincial engineering regulatory body, requiring assessments or exams of qualifications.	Some provinces
Teachers	Often need provincial certification, which may include additional education and tests.	Yes
Accountants	Must meet Canadian Accounting standards and may need to pass the CPA exam.	Some
Electricians	Licensing is province-specific, often requiring local exams and proof of trade qualifications.	No
Plumbers/ Pipefitters	Require provincial trade certification that may involve additional assessments or apprenticeships.	Limited

Profession	Requalification Requirements	Bridging Programs?
Social Workers	Provincial license is usually necessary, with specific requirements varying by region.	Some provinces

Resources

- https://engageq.notion.site/infusionhosts
- https://moving2canada.com/features/how-to-move-to-canada-as-a-nurse-may-20-2026/

10.8 A SIN

https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/sin/apply.html

No, not the religious kind, a *Social Insurance Number*, as used by employers and banks to remit taxes. Think of a Social Security Number in the US.

This is available to anyone who is legally working, so you can pay your taxes. The government suspects that a black market exists: https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/sin/protection.html Fortunately if you start in *any* of the proper channels, you will get one, good for life.

10.9 Medicare

If you are a permanent resident, an accepted refugee or have a work permit, you can join your provinces' Medicare plan. For the Ontario Hospital Insurance Plan (OHIP) in particular, you can either apply in person at ServiceOntario offices, or online. You will have to spend 153 days out of the next year in Ontario, though, to permanently qualify as an Ontario resident.

https://www.ontario.ca/page/apply-ohip-and-get-health-card

10.10 A Canadian Driver's License

You can drive on your US or other license for between 60 and 90 days, and that includes the time you're waiting for a license-exchange appointment. That waiting can eat up much of your time, and if you exceed it, you will need to stop driving, so apply as soon as you arrive.

Resources

- https://moving2canada.com/living/driving/drivers-license-in-canada

10.11 A US to Canadian Dictionary

Here's a few "translations" of store names from US to Canadian, courtesy of Nova Scotia Healthcare Infusion.

from Nova Scotia healthcare infusion, ask for permission or rewrite

Category	Canadian Company	US Company

Pharmacy & Health		
	Shoppers Drug Mart	CVS / Walgreens
	Guardian / IDA – Independent neighbourhood pharmacies	
Grocery Stores		
	Sobeys	Krogers
	No Frills – discount grocer	Aldi
	Giant Tiger – Discount grocery / general store	
Retail Stores		
	Canadian Tire – Large-format general retail (automotive, home and seasonal)	
	Winners	TJ Maxx
	Dollarama	Dollar Tree
	HomeSense	HomeGoods
	Mark’s – Workwear and casual clothing	Dick’s
	Sport Chek – Sporting goods retailer	
	Mountain Equipment – Outdoor gear	
Home Improvement		
	Kent	Lowe’s / Menards
	RONA	Lowe’s
	Home Hardware – a smaller-scale Home Depot	
Gas stations		
	Petro-Canada – National gas station brand	
	Ultramar – Regional gas station chain	

	Irving Oil – Major regional gas station chain in the east
Coffee, fast food	
	Tim Hortons, a main coffee chain. Usually called “timmies”
	Second Cup
	A&W Canada – A popular burger chain, available in some US markets.

10.12 Forums and Discussion Groups

https://www.expatexchange.com/expats-living-in-canada/canada-expat/forum/183/1

Canada Expat Forum

https://www.expat.com/en/forum/north-america/canada/

Expat.com

https://www.facebook.com/groups/movingtocanadacommunityandchat/

Facebook

https://discord.com/servers/journey-to-canada-r-immigrationcanada-994709047288791120D

Discord server for Reddit r/ImmigrationCanada

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In Short

Lots of organizations don’t help immigration, but do help immigrants